

Bandwagon

May-June 2013

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The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

Circus Historical Society

The Circus Historical Society's mission is to preserve, promote, and share through education, the history, and cultural significance of the circus and allied arts, past and present.

Founded in 1939, the Circus Historical Society, Inc. (CHS) is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit educational organization. Membership includes people from all walks of life including historians, scholars, circus personnel, memorabilia collectors, Americana specialists, and individuals who share both a love of the circus and a desire to preserve and disseminate its great and interesting heritage.

Benefits of membership include a subscription to CHS's journal, *Bandwagon*. The journal features a range of research and articles related to the rich history of the circus. Article types vary from intensively researched historical essays to wonderfully vivid oral histories that capture the stories of individuals from all aspects of the circus world. Members also receive newsletters filled with fascinating circus facts and news from members, circuses, museums, and other related groups around the world.



Frederick W. Glasier, circa 1905.

Courtesy of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Frederick W. Glasier Collection

CHS members gather annually at a different location in North America to hold a convention. Papers are given, films and slides are presented, meaty tidbits of circus history are exchanged, current circus executives set forth their views and challenges, friendships are renewed and new ones made, all in the interest of circus history preservation. These sessions represent the culmination of a focused year of circus research and writings on the part of many CHS members and are cherished visits to the circus past and present.

For information on joining the Circus Historical Society,
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Website and Back Issues

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MAMMOTHS, MONSTERS AND MASTODONS! IN THE GREAT FOREPAUGH SHOW!

Forepaugh's 1880 trade card image may have been inspired by the contemporary "bone wars" between paleontologists Charles Marsh and Edward Cope. Their efforts led to the discovery of 142 species of dinosaurs and sparked popular curiosity about them. The Forepaugh show may have intended to compare creatures in its vast menagerie to the extinct animals.

RMA, Tibballs

Circus Historical Society

circushistory.org

Mission Statement

"To preserve, promote, and share through education the history and cultural significance of the circus and allied arts, past and present."

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Editor's Note

Taking over the role of editing *Bandwagon* is a humbling task, one which I am really honored to assume. I hope to be as thoughtful and rigorous in my efforts as my predecessors. For over fifty years, the Pfening name has graced the masthead of the Bandwagon. Under the editorship of first, Fred Pfening, Jr. and then, his son, Fred Pfening III, the Journal has grown in size, scope and, most importantly, quality. Their dedication to producing an engaging and informative publication was unwavering, and more than 300 issues are testament to their passionate commitment. I remember Fred Pfening, Jr.'s generosity in sharing his vast knowledge of circus history with me as I began my career at the Ringling Museum. And I am truly grateful to Fred Pfening III for his kind support as I undertake this endeavor. He has shared many useful insights that I hope will help me live up to the standards set during the Pfenings' stewardship of *Bandwagon*.

Fred Dahlinger, Jr. was of great assistance to me in every step of this process, providing me with the early draft of the Thayer manuscript, writing the introduction and working closely with me to identify the best images for this issue. I am also most grateful to Jim Foster who did a significant amount of editing before I even came into this project. Peter Shrake has been incredibly kind in allowing access to the wonderful collections of Circus World Museum as we searched for images. Judy Griffin and Deborah Walk have given moral support and useful criticism. Anita Buck excelled at working through Thayer's text, clarifying the narrative and emphasizing the remarkable scope of his research. John and Mardi Wells have been wonderful sports in starting the whole design process anew with a new editor. Their expertise and hard work have turned out a beautiful issue. A final note of gratitude goes to Preston Thayer, for sharing his father's work with our community of Circus Historians.

J.L.P.

Visit circushistory.org to find articles from earlier issues of *Bandwagon* as well as historic circus routes, text from historic newspapers, and other insightful resources.

In This Issue

by Jennifer Lemmer Posey

With a belief that one of the best ways to look forward is by honoring what has come before, it is truly an honor to have my first issue of *Bandwagon* be one that shares and celebrates the work of one of the finest circus historians, Stuart Thayer. His importance in the ranks of scholars of the history of the American circus is undisputed and his contributions have been the foundation for many new scholars who have recognized the importance of the subject. As a professional charged with sharing the stories of circus history with a broad audience, Thayer's works are critical references for determining dates, chronologies and relationships between the significant personalities in early circus history.

With his research on Adam Forepaugh, Stuart Thayer worked to fill what he recognized as a serious gap in scholarly understanding of the late 19th century circus impresarios. While the showman's name is generally lost in contemporary American popular culture, in his time, it is clear that his name would have been, at the very least, almost as recognizable as his primary competition, P. T. Barnum. Moreover, if accounts of Barnum's statement on Forepaugh's circus are true, then the latter may have produced a show that was bigger and better than Barnum's!

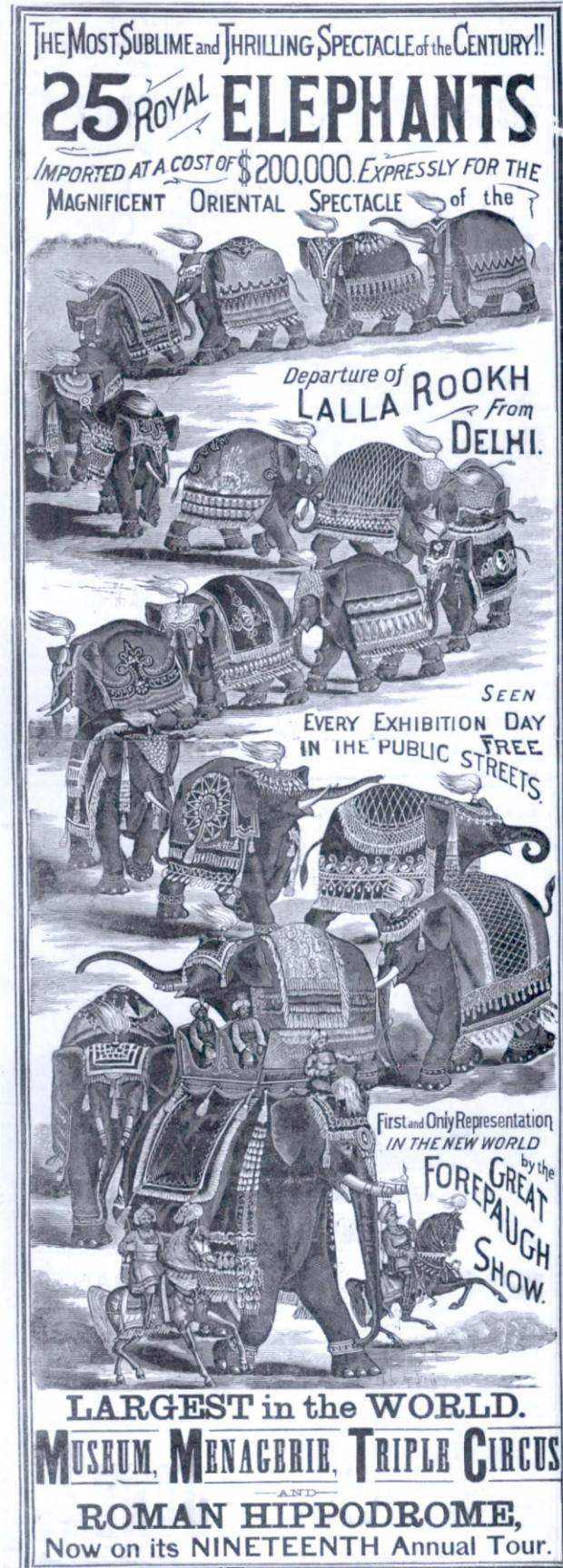
The fading of Forepaugh's name in the history of American entertainment may have been due, at least in part, to his success. Upon Forepaugh's death, James Bailey bought the show; the title eventually was folded into other shows and finally, retired altogether. Happily, a story which had been nearly forgotten was organized by Stuart Thayer into the important work that makes up this edition of *Bandwagon*.

Fred Dahlinger, Jr. has contributed a wonderful introduction that gives us personal insight into Thayer's process of researching and writing about Forepaugh. The Ringling Museum's Curatorial Fellow, Kelly Zacovic, has shared a brief biography of the scholar, prepared initially as part of the finding aid that will soon assist scholars in their own explorations of the Stuart Thayer Papers which were generously donated to the Ringling by Boyka Thayer.

The images in this issue are primarily from two collections, The Ringling Museum of Art's Tibbals Collection, referred to in captions as RMA, Tibbals and the Archives of Circus World Museum, noted in the captions as CWM.

The splendor of the Forepaugh street parade was a prime subject for advertising. This 1888 herald gives special attention to the cost of the 25 elephants included in the procession.

RMA, Tibbals





The cover
Adam Forepaugh
Prophet, King, and Roman
by Jennifer Lemmer Posey

In an age filled with some of the most remarkable impresarios ever known to the show world, there was constant competition not only in how circuses were perceived by their audiences, but how the show owners were presented

to the public. In keeping up with his rival P. T. Barnum—the self anointed “Sun of the Amusement World”—Adam Forepaugh was aligned to literary figures of great power and prestige.

Charles Day, Forepaugh’s press agent, was likely responsible for the colorful depictions of the Governor in the roles of the Veiled Prophet and the Noblest Roman. Whether these two, rather contradictory roles, were fully understood by Forepaugh and Day may be questioned, but without doubt is the intention to ennoble the showman whose circus, in its time, was perhaps even more popular than Barnum’s.

Adam Forepaugh as the Veiled Prophet, reproduced on the cover, is a one of a kind litho in the collection of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Circus Museum. There are no other known images of the show owner in this role. The poster, printed by Courier Company of Buffalo, New York, was likely an image produced to further the elaborate narrative of Lalla Rookh and the \$10,000 Beauty—the parade feature first presented by the Forepaugh show in 1881. Inspired by Thomas Moore's 1817 Oriental poem, *Lalla Rookh*, the pageant referenced the story of a beautiful princess traveling from Delhi to Kashmir to meet her betrothed. Along the way, she is entertained by the stories of a young poet who ultimately turns out to be her fiancé. The first of the stories he tells is "The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan", about a powerful leader, who claimed to cover his face in order to hide his devastating beauty.

While the concept of the Lalla Rookh pageant is credited to Charles Day, there is no reference as to where he received his own inspiration. It is possible that the press agent, or even Forepaugh himself, experienced St. Louis' Veiled Prophet Festival, which originated in 1878, and took place on October 8, right in the middle of the Forepaugh show's run in that city. The festival, organized to recognize and benefit from the successful harvest season, included a street parade and a ball. During the festivities, the honorary Veiled Prophet, a civic leader elected by his peers, selected "The Queen of Love and Beauty" from among the young debutantes.

The exotic Indian setting made Moore's poem a perfect fit for circus pageantry inviting the liberal use of exotic animals, dancing girls, and lavish wardrobe. The St. Louis festival's addition of the selection of a young beauty as queen, would have been a useful advertising twist. When the Forepaugh show advertised its search for the \$10,000 Beauty, it launched one of the first national beauty competitions. Louise Montague, the actress who "won" the beauty contest, would later sue Forepaugh for withheld salary, but she would never actually see \$10,000 from the showman.

The litho may have been printed to compete with the 1878 festival and was, therefore, a precursor to the spec, or perhaps was created for 1881, the first season that the Forepaugh show played St. Louis with the Lalla Rookh pageant. Without more specific information about the date of the print, it is impossible to know its purpose. Nevertheless, comparing Adam Forepaugh to the Veiled Prophet was useful advertising in any group that was familiar with the literary work.

The Veiled Prophet, as crafted by Moore, is a complicated and ultimately dark figure. The poem begins with a description of the prophet as he projects himself:

Of millions raised him, sat the Prophet-Chief,
The Great MOKANNA. O'er his features hung
The Veil, the Silver Veil, which he had flung
In mercy there, to hide from mortal sight
His dazzling brow, till man could bear its light.

The poem then goes on to describe the exotic assemblage of people brought together in the prophet's kingdom:

Well hath the Prophet-Chief his bidding done;
And every beauteous race beneath the sun,
From those who kneel at BRAHMA'S burning founts,[33]
To the fresh nymphs bounding o'er YEMEN'S mounts;
From PERSIA'S eyes of full and fawnlike ray,
To the small, half-shut glances of KATHAY;[34]
And GEORGIA'S bloom, and AZAB'S darker smiles,
And the gold ringlets of the Western Isles;
All, all are there;—each Land its flower hath given,
To form that fair young Nursery for Heaven!

With wonders like that, it is not surprising that the showman would wish to be aligned with such a powerful leader who collected the exotic, just as Forepaugh did for his own kingdom.

In the litho, it is suggested that Adam Forepaugh, as the Veiled Prophet, is a leader; clearly excelling beyond the abilities of a field of competitors in chariots bearing the initials of some of his greatest rivals including P. T. Barnum, W. W. Coup, and the Sells Bros. He races to be the first and finest show seen by audiences across the country. The metaphor, a noble leader set apart from the field, is carried on with Forepaugh's later moniker, "The Noblest Roman".

While Thayer's essay alludes to this title being used by Forepaugh as early as 1880, the earliest known example we have found comes from an 1886 booklet written by Charles Day. The booklet is a fictional account of the adventures of young Adam Forepaugh, Jr. The older showman's portrait appears on the interior cover with the Noblest Roman title. The timing of the publication falls just as Forepaugh finalizes his claim on Madison Square Garden, a venue which had been dominated by Barnum for more than a decade.

In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Antony declares Brutus "The Noblest Roman of the All" because he took part in the assassination in order to prevent the corruption of the republic, not for personal gain. In assuming the mantle of Noblest Roman, Forepaugh was aligned with this notion of doing the right thing because it is noble, not for any individual profit. He was projected as the showman whose actions were true to his honor and always based in the good of the masses. The circus' advertising evolved from depictions of Forepaugh as the King of Showman, an autocratic Veiled Prophet, whose beauty and power set him apart from all others, to the civic minded Brutus whose noble and humble leadership was admired by the masses.

Stuart Thayer's Final Opus

Adam Forepaugh

Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

America's greatest 19th century humorist, Dan Rice, was termed by his biographer David Carlyon as "the most famous man you've never heard of". The man standing in the shadows behind Rice, the showman who placed Rice's name on the circus that employed the nationally-known clown and political commentator, was Adam Forepaugh. He was the circus impresario who propelled Rice to the top of the tent show business by paying him the then unprecedented salary of \$1,000.00 per week. Even as Rice's career waned, Forepaugh's thrived, his name being recognized across the country as the proprietor of one of the two greatest circuses of the 19th century, the other bearing the tremendously famous name of P. T. Barnum.

Similar to most important contributors to the development of the American circus, Forepaugh was not born into it. His connection was brought about by the leasing of horses to a showman. He took over the property on a lark, aspiring, as have many, to a career as a showman. Forepaugh's willingness to take on risk and an ability to manage his daring demeanor to his advantage gave him an enduring edge over more conservative competitors.

Forepaugh's success made him the leading circus manager of the mid-1860s, the latter 1870s and the equal of the Barnum show's sixteen-year younger James A. Bailey throughout the 1880s. No overland circus ever exceeded his in size. Forepaugh was the first showman to commission an entirely new train of special cars to convey his show, the single most expensive capital investment a circus man made. The splendor of his street demonstration was as grand as the Barnum show, with their respective big top dimensions and array of ring stars and animal attractions being equally matched in all regards. The two giants battled for supremacy for a decade, with monster male elephants, exotic white elephants, and other aggrandized elements. Three times Forepaugh and Bailey collaborated on spring openers, to host the grandest aggregations of circus acts seen in a single venue until 1919.

Despite such noteworthy accomplishments throughout a long career, like Rice, Forepaugh is unknown today. That's an unfortunate turn of events, for Adam Forepaugh was indeed one of the top managers of the 19th century American circus. He earned so much fame that a British traveling show was named Fourpawr's Great American Olympia in

1896, six years after his death. His name continued in use after his 1890 passing, appeared nearly constantly through 1911, but active since then only in a one-year revival as a subtitle in 1935.

David W. Watt, a one-time Forepaugh treasurer, was the first writer to broadly chronicle Forepaugh's exploits, doing so intermittently via his weekly memoirs published by the *Janesville (WI) Daily Gazette*. Known to a few, the extensive commentaries generally laid fallow until abstracted by William L. Slout in a project partially underwritten by Stuart Thayer. The work resulted in the transcription and printing of the Watt pieces in the Circus Historical Society journal *Bandwagon* for many years.

Forepaugh was profiled in his own publicity material from the 1870s to his death, with published works by Louis E. Cooke (*Newark [NJ] Evening News*) and Col. C. G. Sturtevant (*White Tops*) adding more details to the skeleton of knowledge. Richard E. Conover, the leading circus historian of his generation, tackled Forepaugh's contributions in a self-published booklet, *The Great Forepaugh Show*. While still useful today, it only summarized a few select highlights in a near three-decade long career of superlative achievements. Little has been published about Forepaugh subsequent to that effort until the present volume.

As he searched for a worthy circus history project following his "Annals of the American Circus 1793-1860", Stuart Thayer recognized that Forepaugh was deserving of full treatment, more so than any other 19th century proprietor and manager. His competitor, Barnum, had already been chronicled in great volumes by Neil Harris and Arthur Saxon. The publication of the Watt memoirs confirmed Thayer's view that Forepaugh was his man. Augmented with an increasing large number of articles supplied by friend Fred D. Pfening III from digitized and key-word searchable newspapers, Stuart set upon his quarry with a lifetime of learned research technique and analytical insight.

Eschewing season by season treatment, Stuart decided upon a method that would provide a focus on Forepaugh's management and decisions and the impact that they had upon the circus business. His insights are provided in the context of the field shows of Forepaugh's time, making it a unique work. It is even more so when one realizes the limitations of the surviving Forepaugh material. There's

MORE FEATURES

AND

GREATER RARITIES

Than all other

Shows of the

Worlds—

n e w —

a n d —

old.—

Mexican Lariat Throwers,

Knights of the Road,

All kinds of WILD BEAST RACES.

Better than Ever.

No End of Features.

Pyramids of Miracles.

Dangerous Feats on the High Wire.

Lightning Bicycle Contests on the

Race Course.

Gold and Tinsel.

A TRUE

GROUPE OF

Brave Arabs

FROM THE

DESERTS OF SUDAN,

AND

HOME OF THE MAHDI.

MORE ATTRACtIONS

AND

RARER WONDERS

—than all other

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Preface



The circus led the field of popular amusement in the second half of the nineteenth century. It employed more people, had the greatest capitalization, and sold more tickets than any other form of entertainment. Though theater and minstrel shows may well have outnumbered it in individual performances, the circus, with the larger seating capacity of its tents, easily dwarfed the competition.

Even the smallest show, or "horse opera," as circuses were referred to long before the advent of motion pictures, drew audiences of 2,000 to 4,000. The larger circuses drew many thousands. Having to turn away hundreds of people at a performance was not uncommon. In 1865 there were forty traveling tented circuses in America; by 1890, more than fifty. Most were undercapitalized and lasted but a season or two. But for others, at the usual fifty-cent and twenty-five-cent admissions, the income could be astronomical. In 1879 William C. Coup, a Barnum partner, was shipping so much specie from the show to eastern banks he was investigated on suspicion of heading a gambling operation. John Robinson, a circus owner for many years, regularly had \$20,000 in gold stashed under his bed in one of the wagons, according to his son.

In a society much given to barter and credit, field shows were one of the few institutions that operated on a cash basis. In the days before income taxes it was not unusual for the larger shows to gross \$750,000 in a season, with half of that clear profit. Returns such as these drew the attention of all kinds of men. Some were talented, some were dreamers, some were venal. There were businessmen among them, and there were profligates, but there was no lack of men hoping to make their fortune. They were said to be "sprinkled with show dust."

Among the best-known circus owners in the

years 1871 to 1890 were P. T. Barnum and Adam Forepaugh. Their names were linked because of the rivalry that existed between them. Each claimed his show was the greatest, grandest, most glamorous of all, and used the other man's circus as measurement. In truth, the differences between their organizations were minor.

Barnum needs no introduction. His name is still in currency. His status supersedes his accomplishments in the circus world; Barnum's ability at self-advertisement and his vision of what was needed to attract public attention made him one of the outstanding characters in American history. Conversely, Adam Forepaugh is all but forgotten. He, too, held himself out as a genius, but his success was as a businessman, not as a public figure, and his business survived him but twenty years.

These two men spent thousands of dollars on publicity. It was the very nature of the circus business. But particularly when they were in opposition one to the other in some city, each had to convince the public that only his wares were worth seeing, and the one-day stands that made up a good portion of their schedules forced them to broadcast most bombastically.

All circus managers were devotees of massive advertising in the form of posters, couriers, flyers, handbills, and newspaper space. In addition, they used that greatest of spectacles, the free street parade. Each spent as much as he could afford to grab the public's attention. And there was (and still is) nothing quite like circus advertising.

In examining Forepaugh's career, we will see how this one-time butcher, livery operator, and horse dealer came to become owner of the largest circus in America, a very wealthy man, and a worthy opponent of the great Barnum.

The Noblest Roman of Them All: The Life of Adam Forepaugh

by Stuart Thayer



CLAY, COSACK & CO. BUFFALO, N.Y.

Adam Forepaugh as portrayed in a poster printed around 1874 by Clay, Cosack & Co.

RMA, Tibbals

PART I

Two Horse Dealers

The American circus began its classic itinerant role with the adoption of the canvas tent as a portable venue. This innovation freed managers from their dependency on large city audiences, and allowed them to follow the population that was moving into the West and the Southeast. Introduced in 1825, the tent became the icon of the traveling show by 1836, when every circus and menagerie used one. In addition, the horse and wagon, the means by which all goods then traveled overland, were brought into the equation. The combination of the sailmaker's art with the cultural mainstays of the horse and wagon created the backbone of the circus. Often the wagon builder and the horse dealer were primary investors in launching a show.

No longer a simple exhibition of athletic skills, the circus became an institution requiring workmen and draft animals, and the capital and planning necessary to provide for a season on the road. Acquiring wagons was easy. Wagon builders were common and every town had one. Circus proprietors bought commercial drays (since known as "express wagons") of about one-ton capacity. Depending on the size of the show, as few as two or as many as twenty drays were used to move from town to town.

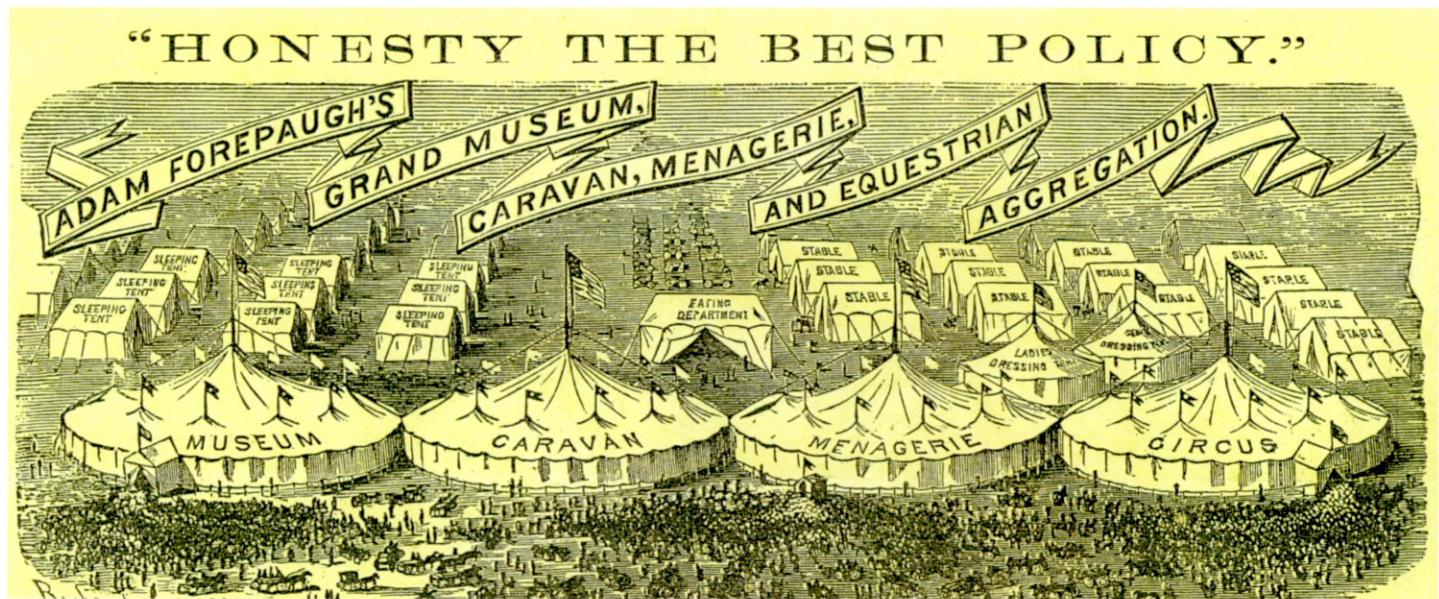
The minimum amount for which a medium-sized circus of the 1850s (ten to fifteen wagons) could be framed was near to \$4,000, and it required thirty to sixty horses. At about \$75 apiece, baggage horses, therefore, would account for \$2,000 to \$5,000, or 30 to 70 percent of the value. While

horses were the largest expense the owner had to face, they also were the only component of circus property for which there was a steady market. The remainder might or might not have value at sale or auction, but horses were not difficult to sell and usually brought close to half their original cost. Thus, investors in a circus always knew a certain percentage of their money was safe. Even better, if a man organizing a circus could interest a livery stable owner or a horse dealer in becoming a partner by putting horses (in lieu of a cash) into the company, he needed to raise less money than if he had to buy the animals on the open market. Thus, we find a number of horse dealers going into the circus business simply because they had animals to sell. One of these persons was Adam Forepaugh.

Adam Forepaugh was born February 28, 1831, in the family home at Tenth and Nectarine in Philadelphia. He was the second of John and Susannah Heimer Forepaugh's six children. The family was of German extraction. Adam's great-grandfather, Balthasar Vorbach (1723–1762), left Germany in April 1753, arriving in America five months later. He may have pronounced his name "Forbaw." Five children survived into adulthood and it was they who changed the spelling to Forepaugh.

In 1872, with only eight years in the circus business, Adam Forepaugh presented a combined museum, caravan, menagerie, and circus.

RMA, Tibbals



Adam's father, John Forepaugh (1807–1893), was a butcher and veterinarian. His butcher shop was a stall in the Market Street structure. The family is described by most chroniclers as being poor ("humble" is the usual term used). Adam had the most rudimentary education, but somehow gained a mastery of figures. His ability to do mathematics in his head, possibly developed during his later career as a horse dealer, was remarked upon by several of his contemporaries. Until Adam was nine years old he attended the school at Twelfth Street and Fairmount Avenue. He then went to work for his father. Young Adam delivered meat to households from his father's market. In 1842, at age eleven, he became a butcher (perhaps as an apprentice) for one John Hinkley, whose shop was also in the Market. He received \$4 a month and his board. After a year Adam had saved \$36. A year later he went to butcher Valentine Boriff at Front and Market for \$5 a month. He stayed with Boriff for eighteen months, or into 1845.

Seeking to improve his position, Adam left home and went to Cincinnati, where he worked at the Brighton House, an inn, for \$30 a month, and in 1846 for a butcher named Wunder for \$100 a month. Adam stayed in Cincinnati for one year. Louisville was next, and there he found a position at \$200 and board per month. After six months he left butchering and opened a business selling and buying horses and cattle. By a year later, 1848, Forepaugh had saved \$20,000 (equivalent to more than \$500,000 today). He was seventeen years old.¹

Returning to Philadelphia, Adam followed the trade of horse dealer, selling mainly to transit companies. Eventually he bought into stage lines, one of them being on Broad Street. He also invested in Widener's street railway. Three sources claim that in a single year Forepaugh bought and sold as many as ten thousand horses. Street omnibus companies and the later horse-drawn street railways were voracious users of horses, needing as many as a hundred thousand animals a year



This alleged portrait of Forepaugh in his youth was printed along with a poem about the showman in The Album, an advance courier printed in 1883.

RMA, Tibbals

to power the cars in the three hundred cities that had them. Philadelphia's first street railway opened in 1858.

Forepaugh's name appears in a *Philadelphia City Directory* in 1855. He was listed as a horse dealer with an address at 1017 Jefferson Street, in the northwest section of the city. He began a business in "polishing up" worn-out horses from various omnibus lines. Once rehabilitated by being put at pasture and fed oats, these animals were sold back to the omnibus companies, which were pleased to buy them because, unlike horses fresh from the farm, they didn't need to be broken to the work.²

By 1860, Forepaugh had bought two buildings at Ridge Avenue and Twenty-First Street. These were essentially long brick stables that may originally have housed the Ridge Avenue Line omnibus horses. Forepaugh's own dwelling was at 2115 Twenty-First

Street, across from the stables. He not only bought and sold horses from the Ridge Avenue location, but operated a livery stable as well, advertising "Horses for the Park," meaning Fairmount Park, a few blocks to the north. When streetcars replaced the Ridge Avenue horse cars, Forepaugh left the omnibus business.

We don't know when Adam married Mary Ann Blaker (1835–1872), but it was sometime near to 1860. Their first child, Adam Jr., was born in November 1861. It appears that their first home was at the Twenty-First Street address.

The Civil War began in the spring of 1861, and the government needed vast numbers of horses. Forepaugh, owner of a thriving dealership, was well placed to supply these. He formed a partnership with William Bray of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, which established depots in Greensburg, Pittsburgh and Johnstown.

Bray was quoted as saying, "Those three cities were our general shipping places for more than two years. And it was many a day in the spring of '62 that Adam Forepaugh and I would drive anywhere from twenty-five to sixty miles in a day, and often buy from twenty-five to forty cavalry



Mary Ann Blaker was Adam Forepaugh's first wife and mother of Adam Jr.

CWM

horses... Adam Forepaugh's means seemed to be unlimited, and whenever we would run across a smaller dealer, who had a carload ready to ship, we would buy them and they would be shipped into Philadelphia as Forepaugh and Bray horses.³

David Watt, Forepaugh's treasurer in the 1880s, said Forepaugh sold to the Army as late as 1863. The horses specified, or preferred, by the military for cavalry mounts were the same size as those used by the circus as draft animals: 900 to 1,300 pounds, and 14 to 17 hands high.

In 1863 or early 1864, Forepaugh sold horses to the newly organized Great National Circus. This fledgling concern was owned by John "Pogey" O'Brien, himself a former horse dealer. If anyone served as Forepaugh's mentor in the circus business it was O'Brien. A short and beefy rascally man so badly afflicted with asthma that he had to sleep in a chair, O'Brien has been accused of all sorts of chicanery. He cheated his employees, his debtors, and his printers. He even tried to cheat the collectors on toll roads. Yet what he did may have been the norm for men in his position. We hear of others being equally underhanded. It could be that O'Brien enjoyed bragging about his peccadilloes, thinking that they proved how much smarter he was than other people. However, during the course of his career he was involved with such stalwarts of the industry as Forepaugh, P. T. Barnum, and Hyatt Frost, and it is unlikely they would have accepted him if he had been the scoundrel some commentators have painted. There can be no doubt that O'Brien knew the circus business; he once had four shows on the road the same season.

O'Brien's nickname, Pogey, was derived from a youthful occupation selling porgies (menhaden), a sweet-tasting, foul-smelling, and very bony fish, from a wagon in the streets of Frankford, a neighborhood in Philadelphia. The son of a stonemason, O'Brien (1836–1889) soon moved up in the world, first as a stage driver and eventually as the operator of several omnibus lines in Frankford. In the nature of stagecoach companies, the owner accumulated horses. O'Brien turned to horse dealing, by way of which he entered the circus business. In 1861 he sold horses to the Gardner & Hemmings circus. Apparently this sale was on an installment basis, as O'Brien hired on as boss hostler in order to keep an eye on his property. This was not an uncommon

thing for a horse dealer to do. At season's end O'Brien took a one-third interest in the show. Then, five weeks into the 1863 season, he sold his portion of Gardner & Hemmings and framed the Great National Circus.

Forepaugh seems to have entered the picture with this O'Brien venture. We find no need for horses on O'Brien's part before 1863. But in line with our characterization of him he failed to pay Forepaugh, or so it seems. What was said to be O'Brien's sale of the Great National to Forepaugh at the end of the 1863 season may actually have been a foreclosure.

Charles H. Day, long-time agent, wrote in the 1880 season's route book that Forepaugh first sold horses to O'Brien in 1861.⁴ This date was picked up and repeated by some historians. However, since O'Brien had no circus in 1861, we think this date was in error.

All the references to an 1861 sale use the figure of sixty-two horses. Day reported the sale as being for \$9,000. This amounts to about \$145 per horse, a sum in line with the cost of animals during the Civil War. Such prices were still current during 1863 and 1864. This was almost twice what they had been in peacetime.

If we accept that Forepaugh first sold to O'Brien in 1863, which is possible, then we must assume the Great National Circus was a twenty-wagon show. However, a description of the Great National by Birkit Clarke (1845–1918), Forepaugh's agent for nine years, says it was "a tight-waisted affair," meaning it was not very impressive. Clarke said, "Parties have told me that when it started it had three performers,



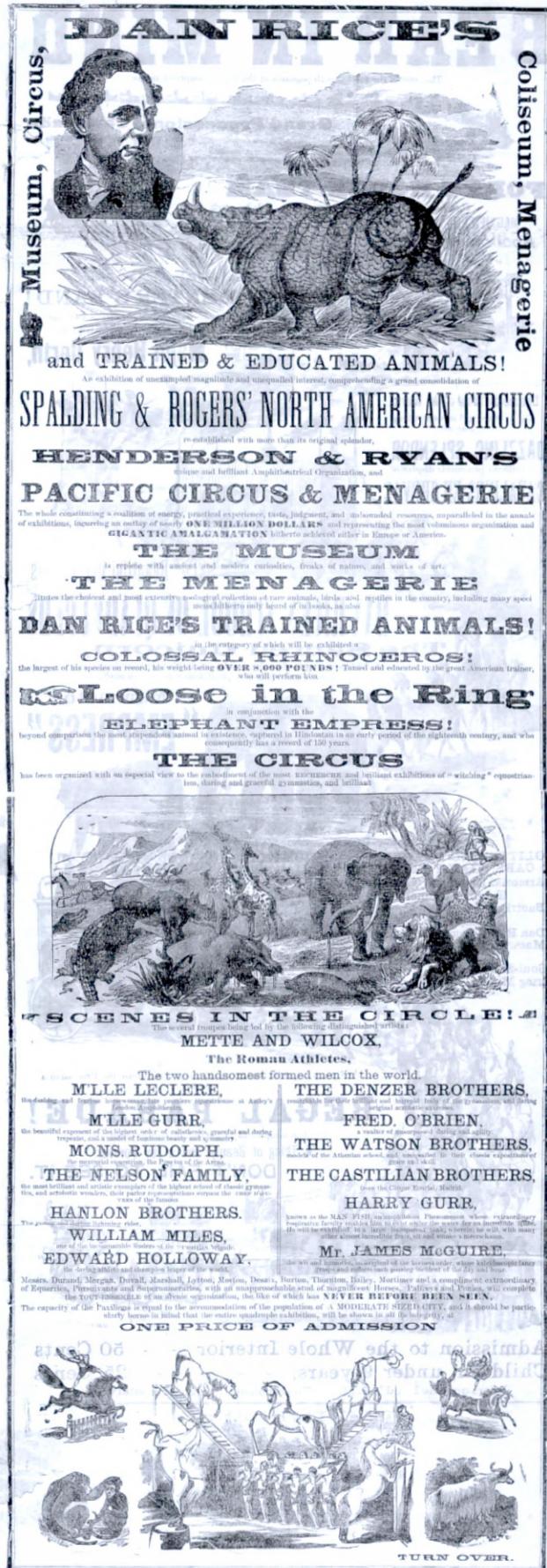
John "Pogey" O'Brien, seen here on an 1884 herald, became Forepaugh's first partner in the circus business when the former failed to make full payment to the entrepreneur.

RMA, Tibbals

ers, four musicians, four canvasmen, and everything else in proportion. Be this as it may, the concern made money, and if I understand rightly, during the next season [i.e., 1864], Forepaugh became Mr. O'Brien's partner."

Clarke's assessment of the Great National is at variance with the *New York Clipper*'s pre-season report, which, as we know, was dictated by the circus itself and thus prone to exaggeration. The *Clipper* lists an even dozen performers, as do the season's advertisements. This is further proof that the Great National was a twenty-wagon show, and therefore needed about sixty horses.⁵

Clarke's statement that Forepaugh became O'Brien's partner in 1864 has merit, because of the number of allusions to it in the literature. We assume that the various refer-



ences to 1861 as stated by Day actually occurred in 1864.

To repeat these assertions, Day said in the 1880 season's route book, "Forepaugh sold to John O'Brien sixty-two horses for \$9,000 and took as part payment an interest in the show." In the same piece he said that at a later date Forepaugh visited the O'Brien circus in Pittsburgh, and purchased it. We think Day was talking about two separate transactions.

Clarke, in an article in the *New York Clipper*, stated, "In 1864 Forepaugh sold forty-four horses to a circus, wasn't paid for them, and took an interest in the show."⁶ The *New York Times* reported that "Forepaugh sold O'Brien sixty-two horses for \$9,000. O'Brien neglected to pay and on an eventful day in 1865 [actually 1864], Forepaugh took a notion to visit the O'Brien show while it was in Pittsburgh, and bought it."⁷ O'Brien played Pittsburgh from the 19th to the 21st of May in 1864.

Despite the discrepancies in reported cost and number of animals, it is obvious Forepaugh provided horses for which he was not paid, prompting him to foreclose on the show in 1863. Some of the confusion with sales and dates may have arisen because, at the same time that Forepaugh owned the Great National in 1864, he was also O'Brien's partner in the Tom King circus. He supplied fifty horses to the King show. And it may have been the Tom King circus that was foreclosed.

The question arises as to why a man would invest in two circuses in the same season, since the business itself was fundamentally an unstable one. One answer might be that it was relatively inexpensive to frame a traveling circus, once the cost of horses was provided for, and well within reach of an established horse dealer.

Forepaugh was accustomed to handling large sales of animals, having already sold thousands to the Union Army. This experience served him well in supplying O'Brien in 1863 and 1864. In addition, he sold sixty-four horses to the Dan Rice circus (owned by G. R. Spalding) in April 1864 for \$9,200.

The Rice sale averaged \$143 per animal, almost twice what animals brought before the war. Of course, all these sales were of baggage animals; the ten to fifteen performing horses required by an average-sized circus were by their nature much more expensive. The \$143 figure for the Dan Rice purchase was also in line with the price paid by omnibus companies at the time.

If O'Brien sold the Great National Circus to Forepaugh after the 1863 season, if our construction mirrors the reality, then it appears that Forepaugh took possession of the Tom King circus as well. In whatever order they occurred, these events mark the beginning of Adam Forepaugh's twenty-six-year career as a showman.

Forepaugh's name appears nowhere in the advertising of

Dan Rice's national popularity gave him the name recognition to headline shows.

RMA, Tibbals

O'BRIEN, HANDEMBERGER & ASTLEY'S BIG SHOWS.



THE WONDERFUL THREE HORSE TRIUMPH OF GRACE & DARING.

This 1884 poster, printed by Strobridge, is a rare example of the seasoned showman, Pogey O'Brien, incorporating his own name in a show title.
RMA, Tibballs

the Great National Circus in 1864. Since he became the owner in mid-season, this is not surprising. Handbills and newspaper cuts had been written before the season started. There can be no question that Forepaugh was the owner, as it was he who sold the show in early 1865.

The Great National opened the 1864 season in Alexandria, Virginia, and after visiting Washington and Baltimore, spent most of its tour in Pennsylvania and New York. A winter show was opened at the Continental Theater in Philadelphia on November 10 that lasted through much of December. As Clarke wrote in 1872, "The show made money."

The 1864 season was the best to that time for circuses in America. The war seemed to be winding down and the public was again ready to spend money on amusement. Wartime wages filled most pockets. No doubt Forepaugh shared in this prosperity. And not just from the Great National.

Forepaugh joined with O'Brien in organizing Tom King's Excelsior Circus, which opened as an indoor show in Philadelphia on March 12, 1864, and as a field show in Frankford on April 18. Built around the famed leaper Tom King (1832–1877), the circus included one of the early fly-

ing trapeze acts, that of Louis Zanfretta.

At most stands the title read "Brien's Great Show and Tom King's Excelsior Circus." This was the first time O'Brien's name, or a version of it, appeared in advertising. Why he did this isn't known, though a guess would be it was a subterfuge to protect against lawsuits. We know all O'Brien's property was in his wife's name. Unlike most managers, who seemed to bask in the glow of publicity, throughout his career O'Brien used artificial names for his circuses. He was quoted as saying, "It ain't no use in buying a name. Go out in the graveyard and pick out the first name you can find, and it'll be just as good as Barnum's."⁸ O'Brien proved this maxim well into the 1870s, when he operated as many as four circuses in a season, all with made-up names.

Tom King owned no part of his eponymous show but he was characterized as being Forepaugh's "man on the lot." O'Brien was the manager, while Forepaugh occupied himself with the Great National.

O'Brien and King had a falling out and King left the show on August 20, 1864. Several performers left with him. Forepaugh simply hired them for the Great National. The

disagreement may well have been over one of O'Brien's notorious fiscal tricks. The important thing about the defections was that it proves O'Brien had nothing to do with the Great National in 1864, since that's where King ended up. King published a card in which he said he would give O'Brien twenty days to stop using his name.

Forepaugh sold three-quarters of the Great National to Stone & Rosston, owners of a circus by that name, sometime that winter. Later, he allowed show printer Samuel Morse to buy the remaining quarter.

Money-wise, 1864 had proven a good year for Forepaugh. He had two large sales of horses and presumably made a profit selling the Great National. On September 24, his wife presented him with twin sons. Sadly, the boys did not live to see their first birthdays.⁹

The milieu that Forepaugh entered when his career segued from horse-trading to circus management was like no other. Ordinary principles of commerce did not apply in a trade dependent on discretionary spending. The bellicose advertising and drum-pounding ballyhoo endemic to the circus fitted well with the dynamics of a society that was maturing at its eastern edge, yet still wild at its frontiers.

The postbellum society was made for characters such as traveling showmen. America was expanding in all directions; the horizons of effort seemed limitless. New ideas, new inventions, new territories were everywhere. The railroads epitomized this phenomenon, but so did the increasing size of farms, and the miles of mills along the rivers. Immigrants filled the cities and found employment in industries that hadn't existed before the Civil War.

As against clerking in a store or plowing on a farm, traveling across the land with a circus was like a siren call to a young and vigorous male. But it was not everyone's cup of soup. A person attempting to rise to the standards of the middle class was not likely to find them in the field of outdoor entertainment. These wandering showmen were a rough breed from top to bottom. The workmen, those who handled the tents and drove the wagons, were continually outdoors from April to November "and never saw the inside of a building." They slept when and where they could, ate standing up, and were notorious for stimulating themselves with alcohol. Their average wage was twenty dollars a month. As with the men who went into the woods or descended into the mines or plied the rivers, they were mainly immigrants, uneducated, and easily excited. They prided themselves on their fighting ability—a skill they often needed in the face of men just like themselves in the towns in which they showed.

Forepaugh himself did not hesitate to use his fists when he felt it necessary. C. H. Day recalled the time the driver of a coal cart grossly insulted the showman by swearing



Adam Forepaugh as presented in the 1867 booklet, Animals and Birds in Forepaugh's Menagerie. RMA, Tibbals

at him, whereupon Forepaugh got out of his carriage and whipped the fellow, to the delight of those who witnessed the provocation. Upon being congratulated by a bystander, Forepaugh remarked, "I'd take off my overcoat if I was going to try it again."¹⁰

Forepaugh was not a gentleman, nor did he claim to be. He was as rough as was required in the milieu in which he operated. Nor was he an advocate of the truth. An unidentified man, long in Forepaugh's employ, once told the *Philadelphia Record*:

I never saw Adam in a corner that he could not wiggle out of, and I have seen him in some pretty tight places. He was the greatest emergency man I ever saw, and you could never catch him at a disadvantage. Some years ago we had the show out in Ohio, and we opened the menagerie on Sundays, giving no performance but merely showing the animals for a quarter admission.

In several places that we struck the authorities were very strict on the Sunday question and at last Mr. Forepaugh was arrested for Sabbath breaking. He said to the indignant town authorities that the proceeds of the Sunday shows were turned into a charity fund for sick and disabled employees, and instead of fining him the authorities commended his generosity, and let him go on with the show. But nobody ever heard of that charity fund before or after that occasion.¹¹

FOREPAUGH'S GREAT AGGREGATION MUSEUM, MENAGERIE AND TRIPLE CIRCUS.

ONE OF FOREPAUGH'S \$30,000 EMERALD AND GOLDEN CHARIOTS, REPRESENTING THE FOUR QUARTERS OF THE GLOBE.

GRAND FREE EXHIBITION.
THE
MARDI GRAS CARNIVAL
TRIUMPHAL STREET PAGEANT
A SCENE OF
GRANDEUR, POETRY AND BEAUTY
MOVING LIKE MOUNTAINS OF GOLD.
EVERY DAY
AT 10 A.M.



THE LARGEST SHOW IN THE WORLD.

By 1880, Forepaugh's parade featured an array of beautifully gilded wagons.

RMA, Tibbals

Former employees recalled Forepaugh as "a tremendous worker, up early and late, and content with four or five hours of sleep." He had to but walk once around a horse, say how much he would pay, and didn't change his offer, according to one of his agents. Louis Cooke (1830–1923), another of Forepaugh's agents, wrote, "As a horse dealer (Forepaugh) had the peculiar ability to remember in what town he bought a horse, the business situation in the town, its location, and the price of the animal." Another commentator said Forepaugh could even remember if the horse had a halter.

If Forepaugh got taken in a purchase, which was seldom, he would respond with a sober mien that might last until the next opportunity arose. It is possible that his personality was ideally suited to circus management. There's no doubt he was successful at the task.

The one-ring circus, Forepaugh's métier, had by his day settled on the forty-two-foot ring as the center of the arena. The seats surrounded the ring, and the cage wagons, if there

were any, were placed either around the ring or along the tent walls. This latter arrangement allowed the public to view the caged animals without watching the action in the ring if they so chose. It was by no means unusual for some of the public to view the animals but refrain from watching circus acts. There was much discussion and sermonizing regarding the evils of public performing, and it was not confined to the circus; other questionable pursuits were the theater, dancing, and barbecue parties, all of which were associated with drinking and prurient activities. In 1869 Forepaugh would solve this latter problem of perceived unseemliness by separating the arena and the menagerie. The two-tent circus, he explained, "was how I caught the church people." The plan was exclusive to his show for two seasons before everyone copied him.

In the early history of the traveling circus, the circle of seats surrounding the ring had been four or five tiers high until 1847, when Gilbert Spalding (1812–1880) raised them

to eleven rows. To reach this number he had to raise the height of the tent. Spalding did this by introducing quarter poles—roof supports that went between the center pole and the side poles, thus dividing what had been a circle of canvas into quarters.

For traveling, one or two express wagons carried the rolled-up canvas. The express wagons that circuses used were 13 to 15 feet long with two-foot-high sideboards and carried about a ton of goods. The two-horse teams that pulled most such wagons cost about the same as the wagon itself by 1864. The tent poles were carried in the much longer pole wagon.

The line of wagons, called the "train," would form up as early as midnight, depending on the distance to the next show town. The only limitations to circus travel were distance and time. In the twenty-five weeks of the summer season (April to November), they were bound by the road network and the willingness of local authorities to permit them to perform. In 1868, for instance, the seasonal average between stops was eighteen miles.

Forepaugh and the few staff members and performers stayed in hotels, and departed later. The workmen slept where they could. "We were hardy people," explained a man who slept under wagons. Their nights on the road were uncomfortable. Some tied themselves to the wagon seats so they wouldn't fall off if they fell asleep. After reading many diaries and memoirs one has to come to the conclusion that the operative word in wagon travel was fatigue. "We sleep in the winter," was the stock answer.

When the church steeple of the designated town appeared above the treetops, the cry "China!" was raised, the rationale behind the cry being that since they had been on the road so long they must have reached Asia. Once on the circus lot, the tents were raised. In Forepaugh's early days this meant the big top and the horse tent. The outside show, or sideshow, was independent of the circus before 1878, being operated as a "privilege" by a third party. The sideshow operator paid for the privilege of accompanying the circus and feeding off its crowd.

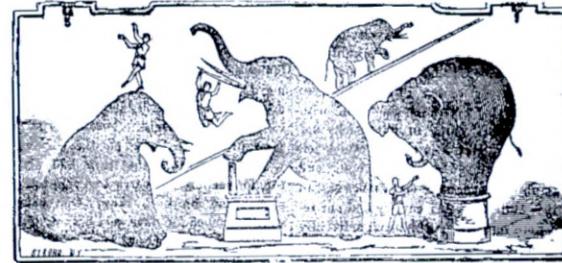
Miscellaneous little booths sprang up on the circus grounds selling food and drink and offering various exhibits, such as tattooed people, fat women, and skeletal men. The proprietors of the booths, too, paid for the privilege of sharing the lot. Forepaugh welcomed them, since their "rent" went directly to him and not to the official daily income of the circus. This was possible because Forepaugh, the "Sole Proprietor," just as the ads proclaimed, was accountable to no one.

The daily street parade, a show of horses and cage wagons, was almost as old as the circus itself, having begun as a simple line of saddled horses in the road. When menageries came into favor in the 1830s their animal cages lent bulk to the procession, as did the well-decorated bandwagons that led the parade. With the costumed riders, clown carts, and tableau wagons of subsequent years, the street parade evolved into a spectacle by itself. So grand did they become by the late nineteenth century that people were known to watch the parade and then go home without seeing the circus. Fortunately, these were in the minor-

ity. For most onlookers the parade only whetted their appetite for more.

A typical parade would form up about ten a.m., and return to the lot by noon. What is referred to now as "lunch" was not a scheduled meal, breakfast and dinner being the employee repasts. Hotel bills of the time list breakfast as early as four a.m., and dinner (called supper by the rural population) between the afternoon and evening shows.

**M A B I E ' S
G R A N D
M E N A G E R I E !**



A N D
M O R A L E X H I B I T I O N ,

Of the marvels and splendors of Animated Nature, organized for the season of 1863, is the most extensive, complete and magnificent establishment of the kind extant. Language is inadequate to perfectly describe

T H E L I V I N G W O N D E R S

Congregated in this matchless Cabinet of Zoology. All parts of the world have contributed to this superb collection, and its completeness leaves nothing to be desired by the most exacting critic. It is conceded that a more brilliant display of

W I L D A N I M A L S & R A R E B I R D S

has seldom, if ever, presented to the admirers of Natural History. The wealth and energy of the Proprietor, combined with his masterly appreciation of public taste, enable him to succeed, where another less competent would have failed. In the formation of the most complete Menagerie in the world. The following list embraces some of the

Z O O L O G I C A L A N D O R N I T H O L O G I C A L S P E C I M E N S :

Asiatic and African Elephants,	Lioness and Whelps,	Madagascar Rabbits,
Cape Good Hope Lion and	Zebra of Zahara,	African Pelicans,
Lioness,	Apes Monkeys and Baboons,	Spanish Macaws, Whidah Birds,
Amazonian Black Tiger,	New Holland Kangaroos,	African Crowned Cranes,
Senegal Leopards,	Peruvian Vultur,	Gold, Silver, Chinese & English
Borneo Malayan Tiger,	Alpaca of the Andes,	Pheasants, King Loris Birds,
Panther of Paraguay,	Santa Fe Bison,	Albino Guinea Hen,
Striped and Spotted Hyenas,	Nebraska Buffalo,	White & Grey Tropical Cockatoos
California Grizzly Bears,	Siberian White Coons,	Paradise Birds,
Black Bear of Hudson Bay,	Civet and Musk Cats,	South American, Asiatic and
Cinnamon Bear of Oregon,	Porcupine, Hedgehog,	African Parrots and Paro-
Ichnamons and Ant Eaters,	Opossums, Asiatic Jackal,	queta.
Numidian Lion and Lions,	Syrian Goats,	

Also, a great variety of Australian Birds of gorgeous plumage.

Prof. SEARS, the famous "Lion King!" will enter the dens of Performing Lions, Leopards, Tigers, Panthers and Cougars!

T H E E D U C A T E D E L E P H A N T S ,

ROMEO AND JULIET, will be introduced by SEWART CRAVEN, and among other astonishing feats will actually accomplish the one of STANDING ON THEIR HEADS.

The fighter provoking antics of the trained PONIES AND MONKEYS, and the Comical Males ill enliven the more thrilling scenes of the Entertainment.

The entrance of the Carriages, Cara and Vane of this establishment into each city and town on the morning of Exhibition, will represent a GRAND MOVING PANORAMA, over a mile in length, which will pass through the principal streets, affording the public a gratuitous view of the splendid Caravans, Horses, Trappings, Paraphernalia, and other appendages.

The Band Chariot drawn by a Team of Elephants!

Will lead the imposing Procession, the whole forming a spectacle unsurpassed by ORIENTAL GRANDEUR AND MAGNIFICENCE!

Will exhibit at ALEDO, on THURSDAY, June 4th, 1863, at 1 & 7 P. M. Admission 50 cts. Children under 10 years, 25 cts.

Also, at MONMOUTH, June 1st; OQUAWKA, June 2d; KRITHSBURG, June 3d; ROCK ISLAND, June 5th.

ALEDO, ILL 1863

The Mabie Brothers menagerie was one of the largest traveling the U.S. in the 1860s. CWM

The matinee began at about two p.m., and the evening show at seven or eight o'clock. Each show lasted about two hours. With fifteen performers on average, and almost identical programs, there was little to choose between circuses. They all began with apprentice riders and moved on to lady riders, then to the more expert standing riders, multi-horse acts, and the trained and riderless horses. In between came acrobats, and clown songs and comedy. The reason for the similarity in programs stemmed from what the public expected a circus to be. There was no more variety from circus to circus than there was in daily life. The essential nineteenth century existence was on the conservative side. For this reason, change was greeted with skepticism, and the usual order of things was almost sacred. In 1865, Forepaugh's offering Dan Rice a \$25,000 salary was thought to be madness, as had been the idea of the after-show or concert when it was introduced in 1857. When the after-show was first suggested to him, show veteran Jerry Mabie stated, "They'll tear us all apart."

Given this sameness, the hiring of performers was simplified. The manager sought a rider not because he could perform "The Indian," a popular act that was on most programs. He just assumed there would be a rider capable of it. In 1848, Matthew Buckley outlined such a request to his printer when he told him to leave blank the space in the handbills where the rider's name would go, because they didn't know yet who would do the act. This indicates the act

was more important than the actor: "(List a) four-horse act, but no name (yet) . . . as we don't know whether Harry, or some new hand will do it . . . (also) Indian without name as Harry will do it if we require him."

The closing act was often the appearance of the elephant or elephants. By this time in the evening show the sideboards had been affixed to the cages, the draft horses had been harnessed, the day's receipts had been counted. If the road ahead was in sand or mud, the wagon train might leave for tomorrow's town just as soon as loading was accomplished. Otherwise, there might be time for a few hours' sleep. Breakfast, as stated, was at four or five a.m.

The daily activity just outlined went on day after day (Sundays excepted) from April into November. Every circus in the country operated much the same way. The routine and rituals were identical, or nearly so. For this reason it was fairly easy for workers to switch from one show to another. The tasks were the same, no matter the employer.

What mattered was the leadership. Forepaugh's success as a horse dealer had supplied him with the rudiments of handling large amounts of money. This quality did not necessarily translate into handling personnel.

When O'Brien and Tom King parted company, King was quoted as saying, "I'm sorry I ever associated myself with an omnibus driver." Forepaugh had no such misgivings. In April 1865 he joined with O'Brien to purchase the Mabie menagerie.

PART II The Dan Rice Years

Jeremiah Mabie let it be known sometime in the winter of 1864–65 that he was interested in selling his menagerie. This well-known western show had been on the road continuously for almost twenty years. First operated in 1840 as Mabie's Circus by brothers Edmund (1810–1867) and Jeremiah Mabie (1812–1867) of Delavan, Wisconsin, by 1864 it toured strictly as an animal show. With twenty-two cages of beasts, two elephants, and two camels, its final price turned out to be \$42,000. Not many showmen could afford that figure, but O'Brien and Forepaugh, their pockets full from selling their respective circuses, bought the Mabie show in April 1865.

Mabie's animals had numbered about fifty in April 1864. Given that some died between that time and the sale, it was still a formidable group. O'Brien and Forepaugh were immediately the proprietors of the second-largest menagerie in America.

George Holland, a retired performer, wrote a version of what transpired in the sale, which may be apocryphal but also provides insight into business practices at the time.

While Mr. Mabie was in Philadelphia, he received a telegram from Stewart Craven, who had charge of the elephants, saying that one of them was very sick, and not expected to live, whereupon Mr. Mabie sold them at a much reduced figure with the understanding that they should be taken, dead or alive. No one at winter quarters (in Delavan) had any idea that the elephants had been sick at all, until Mabie returned from the east, when he found both pachyderms in the best of health. This was one time they put it over Mabie.¹²

Apparently, Mabie took this subterfuge in stride, as he took the job of manager for O'Brien and Forepaugh on their



A reproduction image shows one façade of the Philadelphia Circus, circa 1870.

RMA, Tibbals

winter show in Philadelphia in 1865. As with so many circus memoirs, this one may not be a measure of what happened, yet contains enough truth to indicate that something underhanded did transpire. Known to be close-mouthed and tight-fisted, Mabie may have met his match in the two horse dealers who bought his menagerie. His own attempt to finesse the possible sale of a dead elephant he surely rationalized as acceptable business practice.

After buying Mabie's show, in order to appear even grander, O'Brien and Forepaugh decided they needed a well-known personality to head their show. To this end, they made an agreement with the most famous circus clown in America. The partners hired Dan Rice (1823–1900) at a salary unheard of for a performer before that time.

Rice had been a clown and minstrel since 1843. Possessed of a quick wit and a deep voice, as well as being very opinionated—in fact, quarrelsome—he captivated audiences with his fund of jokes, conundrums and riddles. Forepaugh and O'Brien guaranteed him \$1,000 per week for a twenty-five-week season. Not only was this twice what any circus star had previously earned, the fact that it was guaranteed meant Rice would be paid whether the circus made a profit or not. Customarily, circus salaries had been paid out of profits; if the show didn't make money the employees were

not paid. This practice was accepted by all parties. No matter if hiring contracts specified certain salaries; the money was forthcoming only if the show was successful. Employers did pay for food, lodging and laundry, so time spent unpaid was not a total loss.

The arrangement with Rice, while reported in the press, never has been documented. It would seem to be a Forepaugh innovation. Knowing of O'Brien's penuriousness, we would hesitate to credit it to him.

Forepaugh had met Rice in 1864 when he supplied horses to Dan Rice's Great Show, owned by G. R. Spalding. We have not been able to ascertain if O'Brien and Rice were acquainted, but in the small circle of showmen it is not beyond possibility.

Older heads in the business were astonished when it was announced that Rice would receive \$1,000 a week. Hiring Rice at such a salary, and publicizing the fact, is an early indication that Forepaugh had a talent for the business. Just as he had been willing to spend large sums in buying horses for the Army, he did not hesitate to buy the services of a proven crowd-pleaser such as Rice. Throughout his career Forepaugh demonstrated a willingness to hire whomever and buy whatever it took to enhance the quality of his offerings to the public. In this respect he set standards that his

rivals found difficult to emulate.

At that time \$350 was a handsome weekly salary for headline performers, and at least one commanded \$500, none of which was guaranteed. Animal feed, hotel rooms, and licenses had to be paid for or the circus couldn't keep to its schedule.

Lewis B. Lent (1813–1887), a rival showman, announced that Dan Rice did not perform as a clown, but lectured on various topics of the day. In fact, the show was a menagerie; though it was second in size only to the Van Amburgh menagerie, it had no circus acts. After all, the title was Dan Rice's Mammoth Menagerie and Great Moral Exhibition. In addition to his own talent, Rice brought to the circus his trick horse Excelsior and a pair of comic mules. Rice was abetted by John Sears's lion act and Craven, then the leading elephant trainer in America.

Mabie delivered the menagerie to Forepaugh and O'Brien at the Jackson Stockyard at Twelfth and State streets in Chicago, the city in which the show opened on April 26, 1865. The previous year had been the best season in the history of the American circus, and although 1865 was not as good, it was still profitable for the majority of shows. It is believed that only one of the twenty-eight circuses on the road that year closed owing salaries.

The menagerie left Chicago and moved eastward through Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, ending its season at Rice's hometown, Girard, Pennsylvania. The show went into winter quarters in Philadelphia, where Forepaugh had constructed a building measuring 80 feet x 200 feet at the southwestern corner of Tenth and Callowhill. This building would serve as the Forepaugh winter quarters through 1867, and was used by other companies as late as 1872. Called "The Quadrapantheon," but also known as the "Philadelphia Circus," it opened for business on November 25, 1865.

For this undertaking, Forepaugh and O'Brien added a circus troupe to their menagerie. Rice went south to perform in New Orleans. Craven and John Sears remained on the roster. Sam Stickney, Jr. joined as ringmaster. The show was titled Western Menagerie and Great National Circus, preserving the ties to Mabie's animals and Forepaugh's 1864 circus. Rice returned to the roster on February 19, 1866, and the winter season ended on March 26.

At this juncture, Forepaugh and O'Brien decided to dissolve their partnership. There is nothing in the literature to explain why. But both men were strong-willed, and that alone might account for strained relations. O'Brien is thought to have disagreed with the salary paid to Rice in 1865, but apparently it didn't faze Forepaugh, as he continued the contract in 1866. The assets were divided. The only concrete evidence we have of this was that Romeo, the mature elephant, went to Forepaugh, and the calf known as Juliet went to O'Brien.

Once free of O'Brien, Forepaugh never again had a partner. In the years to come, his publicity materials often claimed that he started in the business in 1867, thus wiping the slate clean of the involvement with O'Brien. However, no malice toward O'Brien was intended. In the future Forepaugh helped O'Brien when he needed equipment or performers, and they even shared winter quarters one year. These arrangements lead to the feeling that O'Brien, although a slippery customer, was not considered a pariah by other showmen.

The Dan Rice Mammoth Menagerie was augmented in 1866 by the performers who had been on the indoor roster the previous winter, thus becoming a circus and menagerie, as announced in its new title, Dan Rice's Circus and Menagerie. It did not amount "to shucks," according to a *Clipper* correspondent in Troy, New York. "Aside from Prof. Langworthy's working a den of lions, the performance was poor," added another. Opening week was spent in Washington, DC. The *Clipper* said attendance was greater than that enjoyed by any other circus in the District for years, adding, "The colored population appears to be Dan's best patrons."¹³ This last was not intended to disparage "the colored population." It reaffirmed the circus's broad position in the entertainment hierarchy. At a time when middle-class values were rising, the circus, with its bawdy advertising and near-vagabond life style, was anathema to a solid social order. So, to use a twentieth-century phrase, when the middle classes



PROF. LANGWORTHY.

After Forepaugh and Rice parted ways, Prof. Langworthy, the lion trainer, was Forepaugh's headliner for several years.

RMA, Tibbals

went to the circus they were "slumming." But they did so by the thousands. One has only to read the newspaper coverage to be made aware of the importance placed on circus activities in nineteenth-century culture.

The *Sunday Mercury* of New York editorialized in 1866, "Dan Rice receives the same salary for running the circus and menagerie bearing his name that President Johnson does for running the United States—\$25,000 per annum."¹⁴ This "news item" appeared in a city where the circus itself did not appear. The assumption has to be that the general public knew who Dan Rice was. This may be one reason Forepaugh was willing to spend so much on a single salary.

The 1866 version of the Dan Rice show followed a route through New York and Pennsylvania, where it previously had enjoyed success. Rice was mentioned as a candidate for the Pennsylvania State Senate that year, and apparently spent a goodly amount of his ring appearance talking about it. David Carlyon, his biographer, has implied that Rice's star was waning. Another commentator, Richard Conover, blamed Rice's fading on the increasing size of tents, wherein a talking clown had a difficult time being heard. Whatever the reasons, Forepaugh did not see fit to finance Rice's tour of 1867. The clown found other backers for that season, but returned to Forepaugh's management for 1868.

For the sake of continuity, we will give here the story of the 1868 season before returning to Forepaugh's 1867 tour. Though Rice had been the titular manager of the circus in 1865 and 1866, Forepaugh put his own man in as manager in 1868. This was his nephew, John A. Forepaugh (1852-1895), the son of George W. Forepaugh. The young man's inexperience may have contributed to Rice's oft-voiced dissatisfaction with the way the show was managed. The *Clipper* referred to it as "the Dan Rice wing of the Forepaugh Menagerie." One of Rice's objections was to the "petticoat government" of the show, perhaps meaning John Forepaugh's wife.

The show's management had a burden as well, for Rice was proposed in several quarters as a possible presidential candidate, and he devoted even more of his time in the ring to things political. He took the requests seriously, and even put forward a platform, but outside the area of western Pennsylvania, there was little real support for his ambition. The *New York Clipper* reported on July 18: "The Rice show has taken a big bite out of the Forepaugh show to keep it going. Rice, in running for president, is presenting political harangues from the ring, which are hurting business. Rice stated publicly that he had sold his name for a salary for

Although Forepaugh's name was nowhere to be seen in the heralds and other advertisements, he was the businessman behind Rice's 1868 show. RMA Tibbals

RMA, Tibbals

the last time.¹⁵ It was not a strong program to begin with, and the small show found it hard to support Rice's apparent \$1,000 a week. By July 18, Forepaugh gave thought to closing the Rice show because of the bad business. There were harsh feelings all around, culminating in fisticuffs between Rice and Forepaugh, two men who were not averse to settling arguments by removing their coats. Heralded as Dan Rice's Farewell Tour, it proved to be anything but. The venerable clown was still on tour as late as 1891.

But back to 1867. Having put the years with John O'Brien behind him, and temporarily relieved of Dan Rice and his huge salary, Forepaugh entered 1867 with the first circus that carried his name—"Forepaugh's Mammoth Menagerie and Gigantic Circus." With a title designed to emphasize his menagerie, the animals were advertised heavily and listed almost individually, reflecting the contemporary interest in matters zoological. This was the era of the establishment of zoological gardens, animal sales held by dealers in Europe, and a significant increase in transatlantic animal importing.

By 1867 Manchester, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rotterdam, and Frankfurt boasted zoological collections. Natural history, as a handmaiden to colonial expansion, was popular for the same reason the circus was popular. Exotic animals required no intellect to enjoy; staring at them was one of humankind's favorite things occupations; to cage them was to own them.

The German brothers Charles and Henry Reiche began importing exotic creatures into New York in 1844, and made their fortunes supplying animals and birds to circus owners such as Adam Forepaugh. By the 1867 season, Forepaugh had purchased \$35,000 worth of Reiche imports.¹⁶ This was likely how, after he and O'Brien split the twenty-two-cage Mabie menagerie after the season of 1865, Forepaugh restored the zoological portion of the show to its original size. The Forepaugh circus advertised forty-nine animals in twenty-four cages, indicating two occupants to each den. In addition, there were "led" animals such as elephants, camels, and oxen. To the towns the circus visited, it was like having a zoological garden in their midst, even if only for one day.

Six other shows in 1867 toured sizable menageries: G. F. Bailey & Co., Dan Castello, and Van Amburgh & Co. among them. None of them exceeded Forepaugh's, though the Van Amburgh & Co. menagerie may have equaled it. This was the beginning of a great competition to exhibit rare beasts that lasted into the twentieth century. Where once a circus's horses had been the largest expense, it now became the menagerie that was the mark of a large, successful caravan.

At an admission of fifty cents per person (twenty-five cents for children), the public was offered the chance to visit the menagerie before finding a seat for the circus perfor-

FOREPAUGH'S MAMMOTH MENAGERIE AND GIGANTIC CIRCUS!

THE FINEST
EQUESTRIAN AND GYMNASTIC ESTABLISHMENT IN THE WORLD,
AND THE ONLY

MENAGERIE EVER ORGANIZED IN THIS COUNTRY!

Will Exhibit at Each and Every Place, Afternoon and Night, Advertised Below.

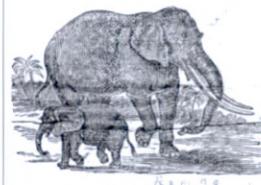
The People are respectfully informed that this

CARAVAN OF GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS

+ one grand School of Instruction, a perfect Zoological Institute, a complete aviary, endowed with all the requisites to impart practical information in regard to the Wonders of Natural History, and to let the people see the

MOST MARVELOUS BEASTS AND BIRDS OF THE VAST ANIMAL KINGDOM!

No concern has as many varieties—so many rare specimens—250 Quadrupeds and Bipedes!



TWENTY-FOUR MASSIVE DENS!

All the inmates recently imported and in perfect health and vigor.

IT HAS 160 BLOODED HORSES!

And shows them all upon the streets in a solid piece of Splendor! A Grand Procession! One unbroken mile in extent.

Among the SPECIALTIES, not to be seen in ANY OTHER SHOW, are the LARGEST AND SMALLEST ELEPHANTS ever captured; the only CALF ELEPHANT EVER IMPORTED; THE TINY ONE YEAR OLD; THE CHILDRENS' SPECIAL PET,

"BABY ANNIE!"

THE CABIAI BABY, OR MAN EATER OF THE AMAZON.

CHETZAH, OR HUNTING LEOPARDS.

THE GIBBON, OR LION APE.

EAST INDIAN ANTELOPE.

THE WHITE BEAR.

THE MONSTER LION, "YOUNG DAVID."

THE SACRED AXIS DEER.

THE TARTARY ZEBRA.

THE BLACK OSTRICH.

THE NYL GAU.

AND THE INTELLECTUAL MONKEY "VICTOR EMANUEL"

(85) *See previous page*
and horn.

First Artistic best gentle

PROFESSOR LANGWORTHY,

The only Artistic BRUTE TAMER, will enter the den and show how to entirely control the

LIONS, TIGERS, LEOPARDS AND PANTHERS!

The subjoined is a cogent list of the Living Inmates of the Menagerie:

FOUR LIONS AND LIONESSES,

TWO BENGAL TIGERS,

TWO CHETZAH LEOPARDS,

THREE SPOTTED HYENAS,

ONE ZEBRA,

ONE NYL GAU,

TWO BLACK OSTRICHES,

ONE HINDOSTAN BEAR,

ONE LAMA,

ONE CABIAI BABY,

ONE GREY OSTRICH,

TWO ASIATIC LIONS,

ONE WHITE PEACOCK,

TWO STRIPED HYENAS,

ONE GRIZZLEY BEAR,

TWO AXIS DEER,

TWO PANTHERS,

TWO AFRICAN LEOPARDS,

ONE POLAR WHITE BEAR,

TWO SUMEDIAN LIONS,

ONE BISON OR COLORADO,

ONE LION CUB,

TWO KANGAROOS,

ONE ABYSSINIAN IBEX,

ONE PALATINE SHEEP,

ONE BURMESE COW,

ONE BACTRIAN CAMEL,

ONE ARABIAN DROMEDARY,

ONE AMERICAN COUGAR,

ONE NEW HOLLAND EMY,

ONE HO-HOT MOUNTAIN WOLF,

ONE MEXICAN PECCARY,

TWO CANADIAN LYNX,

And over 160 IMPORTED BIRDS AND MINOR ANIMALS.

[The CIRCUS TROUPE comprises Mr. JAMES DEMOTT, Mlle. JOSEPHINE, Miss. VIRGINIA, Mr. THOMAS KING, Mr. JAMES WARD, Mr. MAT GEHL, Mons. PERILLE, Mast. HENRY LORENZO BROTHERS, Mr. WILLIAMS, Mr. G. WAMBOLD, Mr. FERNAND TOURNAIRE, the Prodigy Mast. CHARLIE, and Les Freres TOURNE.]

An 1867 advertisement for Forepaugh's Mammoth Menagerie and Gigantic Circus.

RMA, Tibbals

mance. For an added twenty-five cents they could have reserved seating, but Forepaugh soon learned that the farmers who were his customers, with large families in tow, avoided this extra expense. Therefore, he had as small a reserved seat section as any show on tour. The arena exhibition lasted two or three hours, and consisted of fifteen to eighteen acts, half of them featuring riding. Langworthy, the "Lion King," entered the animal cage at each performance.

There was also a concert, or after-show, which amounted to an olio of singers, comedians, and dancers, for which an extra admission was charged. Formerly the venue for minstrel shows, these concerts were by Forepaugh's day much more like vaudeville.

The form of the American circus was established long before Forepaugh was a part of it. In effect, he inherited the

work of those who had preceded him. The ring and its seating, the tent, even the order of the performance had been settled for forty years. However, the demographics of management were changing. Originally, owners had been performers who gathered fellow athletes together to form a traveling company. This system survived as long as the need for capital was minimal and the demands for decisions were minor. But in the 1850s, as shows grew in size, there grew the need to systemize the management.

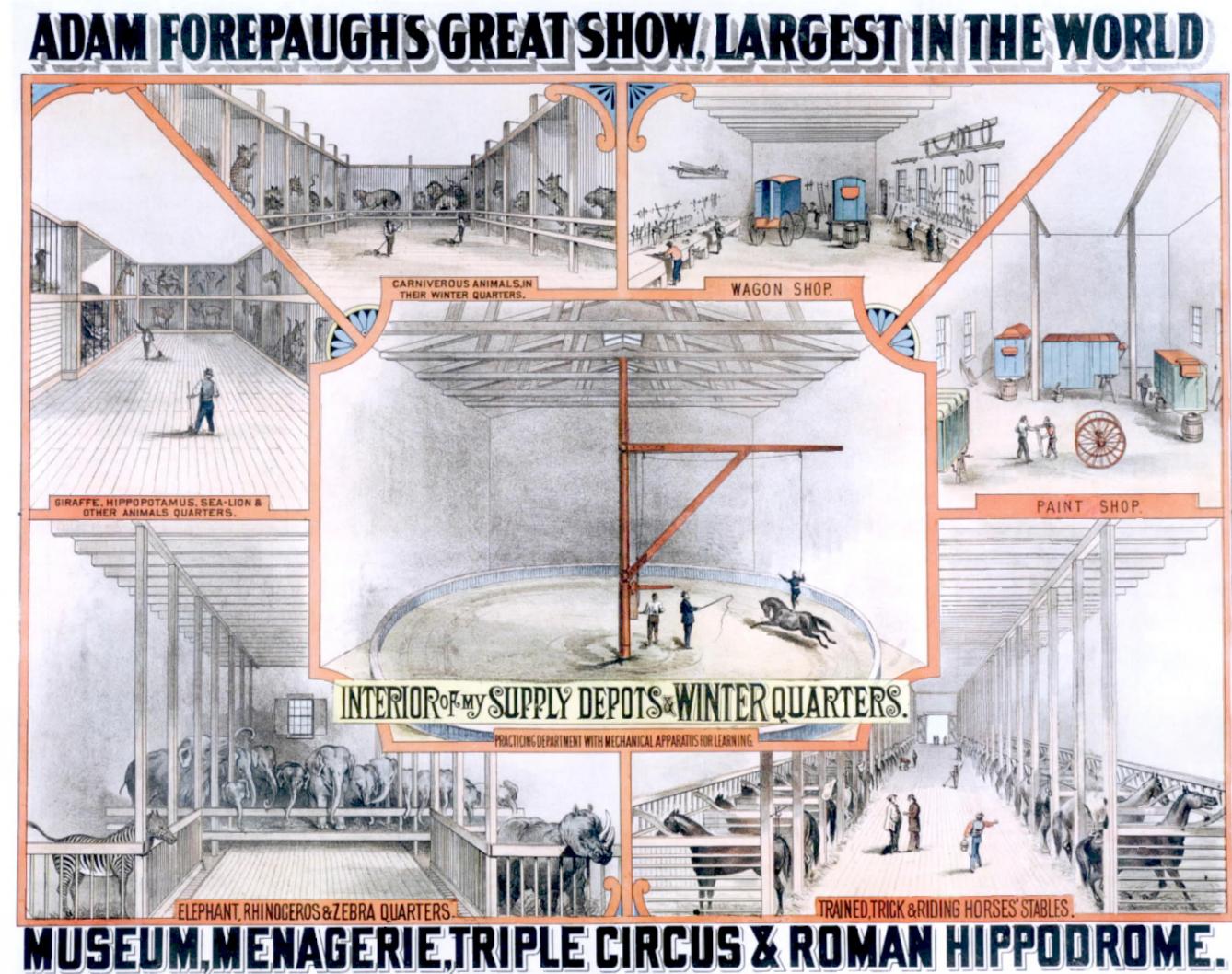
Where once a man sat at the entrance and sold tickets and put the money in his pocket, there came to be ticket wagons with ticket sellers who did nothing else but keep the books. Where once a man rode a horse ahead of the show carrying a few heralds in his saddlebags to tack up in livery stables, there developed an advance "brigade" of a wagon full of billposters who plastered every empty wall with pictorials. There were men who wrote feature stories, given free to local pub-

lishers, to supplement the newspaper advertisements that appeared ten days in advance of the performance. Someone had to reserve and allot hotel rooms and arrange meals for performers and staff. Feed for the animals needed to be purchased, lot rental had to be supervised, and someone found who would buy and haul away the used straw and paper that was the detritus of a day of performing. These tasks had to be done each day, and their supervision required a sense of organization that was not within every man's capability. Dan Castello, a performer and a circus owner of some success, once said that there was always one practical man connected with every successful circus.¹⁷ His reference was to the fact that most circus partnerships were composed of a performer, who looked after the arena, and a layman, to count the money and pay the bills. Forepaugh, as sole owner, counted the money and paid the bills, but he largely ignored what went on in the ring.

This was the contrast between the old ways and

This 1883 litho printed by Strobridge shows the immensity of the Philadelphia winter quarters.

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Performers at the Philadelphia winter quarters, 1872.

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the new, exemplified by Adam Forepaugh, the businessman who invested his money back into his circus and then into real estate, and Dan Rice, the talented performer with spendthrift ways. Rice and his ilk sold entertainment; Forepaugh sought value.

Forepaugh brought to the endeavor what he had learned from John O'Brien, and perhaps from Dan Rice. But he was different from them, a sort of new breed of manager in that he was first and foremost a businessman, meaning that he happened to be a circus owner but could have brought his skills to whichever occupation he chose. Forepaugh had been a successful horse dealer and had prospered in the omnibus business. He was single-minded of purpose, the epitome of a metropolitan capitalist, using money to make money. He avoided being profligate, as Rice was, or bragging about his deviousness, as O'Brien notoriously did.

This 1867 tour has within it the nucleus of Forepaugh's future and illustrates many of the qualities by which his fame is marked. First, he needed capable managers. He drew on the roster of the Dan Rice circus for its manager, advertising agent, treasurer, and advertising writer.

Several of these men went to O'Brien in 1868, an interesting turn of events, which indicates Forepaugh's self-sufficiency. His gruff and independent manner brooked no deviation from his vision. "He did not care who left his show if they objected to his methods," wrote one commentator.¹⁸

He acted as if there were a pool of managers from which he could choose as he needed them.

The *New York Clipper*, in its June 1, 1867 issue, said that Forepaugh's tent was the largest of any show in the country. In circus parlance it was a 120-foot round with two 40-foot middle pieces, or inserts. It had three center poles and sixteen quarter poles, and was larger than Van Amburgh & Co.'s four-pole arena.

The 1867 route began in Virginia, at Portsmouth. The reason for this was that Forepaugh opened the road tour very early, on March 11. Most shows waited until April to begin traveling because most roads were dry by then. Virginia's spring weather was four or five weeks ahead of more northern areas, thus Forepaugh picked up a month's income ahead of his rivals.

Business, as reported in the journals, was excellent. The circus took in more money in two performances in Wilmington, Delaware, than did two others—Dan Rice and John O'Brien—in six.¹⁹ Another newspaper said Forepaugh "took away" \$50,000 in six days in Washington, DC. That amounted to over \$4,000 per performance. Huge crowds were reported in Newark, New Jersey, as well.

An advantage to journalists, and thus to researchers, is that there was a 2 percent federal tax on admissions, a wartime measure still in effect at that time. Thus, the receipts were a matter of public record. It was from this tax collection that the term "bean counters" may have arisen. By using beans, revenue agents could quickly count the people entering the circus tent and then compare that count to what the showmen reported.²⁰

The circus advertised that it intended to visit "every city, town, hamlet, and village in New England." But when it came time to do so, three other companies were known to be in that territory. Even the *Clipper* was aware of this. When Forepaugh reached Boston on July 9, he decided to change his intended route and forgo New England.

Four days later he loaded the entire circus on forty-five railroad cars and set out on a two-day trip for Albany, New York. To this point, the classic overland method had been followed. The circus "train" consisted of some fifty wagons (of which twenty-two were cages) pulled by 160 horses (an advertised total). The equipment (tents, tools, and props) was carried in another twenty or so express wagons, the capacity of which was about one ton each.

The practice of transporting a circus by railroad, while not new, was still in its infancy. Lewis B. Lent had originated such a use just the year before. The flat cars Forepaugh rented were likely system cars from the railroad plus several coaches for the attachés, and stock cars for the horses. The eighty-six employees were likely transported in day coaches. No description of the 1867 train make-up has surfaced.

We mentioned L. B. Lent's circus train of 1866. Forep-



Performers at the Philadelphia winter quarters, 1872.

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augh had gone Lent one better by hauling an entire circus by train. Lent, by contrast, had no menagerie, no sideshow, and no parade equipment other than a bandwagon.

By leaving New England, Forepaugh demonstrated his prescience again, as he resorted to the “Canal Route,” the territory fronting the Erie Canal. Jumping from Boston to Albany salvaged a so-so season and turned a \$100,000 profit.²¹ Of the thirty-five shows on tour in 1867, only three others were traversing New York and Pennsylvania.

At Buffalo the show again went on rails, using the Erie Railroad to visit the towns of southern New York as far as the Massachusetts border. Back to wagons, the circus followed the Hudson River south to New Jersey, and spent a week in Philadelphia. Forepaugh used this time to reorganize the show in preparation for a southern tour.

It had long been a tradition for circuses to tour the South during the winter months. Prior to the Civil War, 60 percent of the shows were out all year. During the war there were no southern dates, perhaps because all the managers were northerners. Therefore, the habit of winter touring was abandoned. It revived slowly, beginning in 1865 with the Howes & Castello troupe (Seth B. Howes and Dan Castello), which went into the South from Nashville.

“Going south” involved reducing the size of the company, changing the type of wagons used, and raising the price of admission. For the most part the southern road system was terrible, so a smaller show was easier on the horses. By

changing to “dead axle” wagons, those in which the wheels and axles were attached directly to the wagon body, and therefore easier to extricate from mud, a great deal of strain on the wagon bodies was eliminated, and much digging out avoided. Admissions were usually raised because of higher license fees in the South, and the fact that there was so much “dead time” between towns. A show might easily spend four days on the road between places large enough in which to perform. The usual admission increase was from fifty cents in the North to one dollar in the South. Touring by railroad, as Howes & Castello did, avoided many of these problems, though the differing gauges used in the South were a drawback to railroad travel that was not corrected until the 1880s.

During Forepaugh’s week in Philadelphia he adjusted the roster, but did not have to transfer to dead axles, since he planned to move by rail from Washington, DC into Virginia. Another calf elephant was added to the menagerie, and delivery was taken of that most rare beast, a giraffe. It was announced as the first such example in Philadelphia in twenty-five years. This claim was probably true. Giraffes are delicate animals, especially in the conditions inherent in wagon travel, and this one lasted but a month.

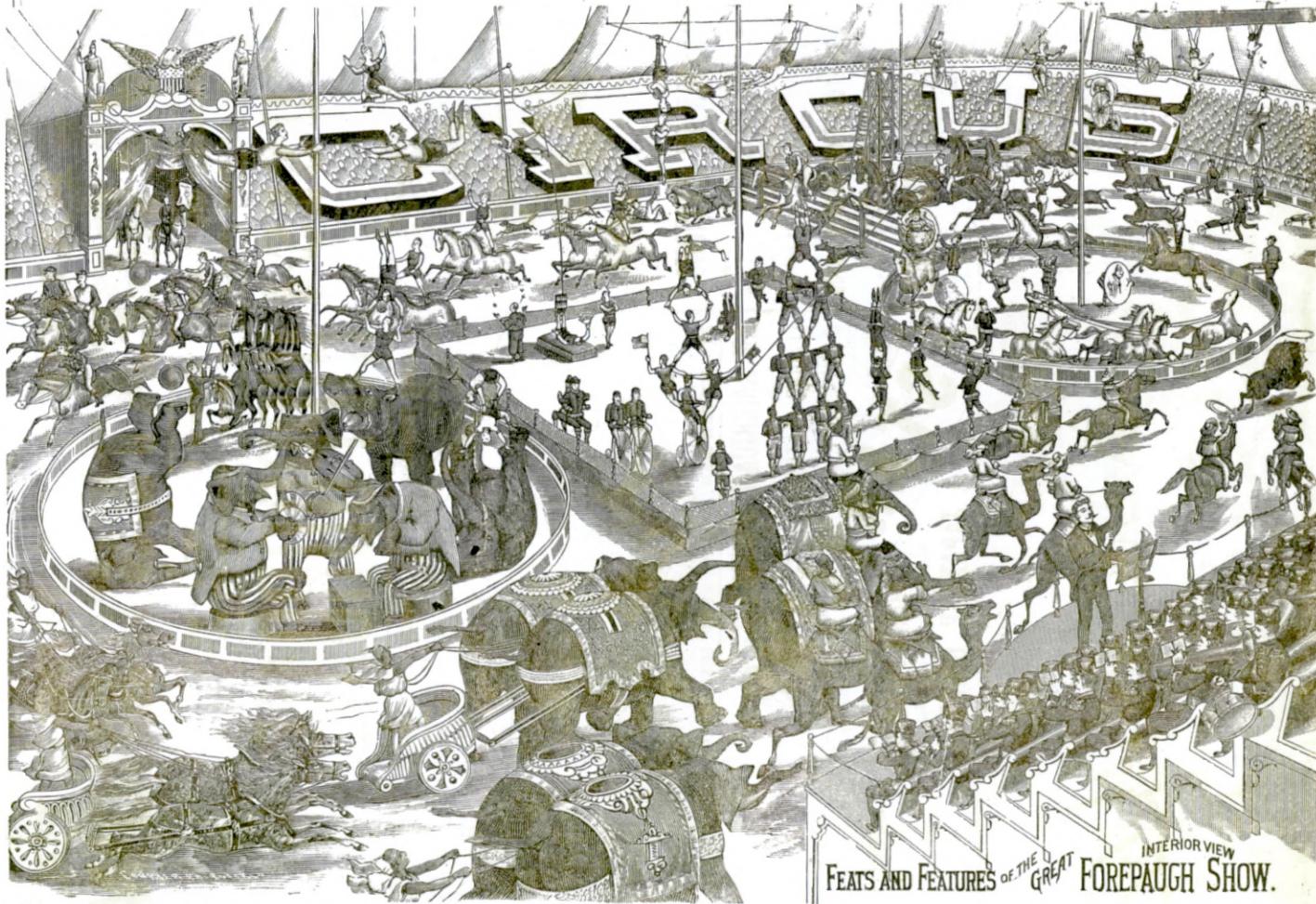
It was also announced that there would be “no extortion of Southern people,” as admission would remain at fifty cents, as it was in the North. This was an important concession; it showed Forepaugh’s concern that the working class be able to attend his show. Throughout his career Forepaugh avoided all attempts to appeal solely to the gentry.

Forepaugh played the towns in which he had begun the season—Baltimore, Washington, and various places in Virginia—in the opposite order he had reached them in the spring. After playing Portsmouth, Virginia, on November 25, he loaded the circus on shipboard and returned to Philadelphia, to the winter quarters at Tenth and Callowhill.

In addition to having a profitable season, Forepaugh had avoided coming into contact with any of the other shows on the road that year. Considering the thirty-five circuses in the rather circumscribed area in which they then traveled, this was an unusual situation. The *Clipper* announced on September 28 that Forepaugh and Lewis B. Lent had sold the most tickets in 1867, far more than any of the others. Lent’s gross was \$186,230, which would give him a net close to Forepaugh’s \$100,000.

In this first season of doing business under his own name, Forepaugh demonstrated that he could hold his own against the competition of the more established managers. He had the ability to find lucrative territory, as witness his early opening in Virginia. He had the decisiveness necessary to make last-minute changes, such as going on the railroad in Boston to avoid the already crowded New England scene, and he endeared himself (presumably) to southern audiences by

FOREPAUGH'S NEW AND GREATEST ALL FEATURE SHOW



THE CANVAS-CROWNED KING OF THE RAIL

A depiction of action under the big top as advertised in an 1884 courier.

RMA, Tibbals

ending what he termed "extortion" in admission prices.

All these actions were those of a risk-taker, which Forepaugh exemplified. It can be said that anyone in the entertainment business took risks. A dependence on discretionary spending makes such business a risk. The world needs food and shelter and clothing, but it doesn't need circuses. We regard as apocryphal the many references in the literature to farmers selling their cook stoves in order to take their families to the circus. (At the time of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Hamlin Garland famously wrote his parents, "Sell the cook stove if necessary and come. You must see this fair.") Newspapers, whose collection of subscription bills were often in arrears, harped about families going to the circus but not paying their just debts. There was a constant tug-of-war among the masses between the lingering Puritanical aversion to entertainments and the promise

of excitement offered by such organizations as Adam Forepaugh's circus.

It is apparent that the crowds on circus day were under the influence of a form of madness. A homogeneous and insular group of people were suddenly free of ordinary restrictions, presented as they were with events that they didn't fully understand. The sights and sounds and temptations of a circus lot contrasted deeply with the drab life of villages and the lonely existence experienced on farms. The colors, the food, the close-packed mass of humanity, all contributed to a disregard of dignity that many found impossible to resist. They bought, they gambled and, fueled by drink, they fought, often with each other, or failing that, with the show people. And sitting in his chair at the "front door" was Adam Forepaugh, whose motto, supplied by a press agent, was "Give the people a good show, and your patrons will be legion."

Part III
Adam Forepaugh, the Man



This May 1873 photograph, taken in Elkhart, Indiana is a rare image of Forepaugh with staff members. Back row (l to r) Hoxie Godurn, assistant treasurer; William Monroe, rider; Sig Feranta, contortionist; and El Niño, rope walker. Seated with Forepaugh Robert McAndliss, treasurer and Kit Clarke, general agent. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

He was a tall, muscular man with an iron constitution and seemingly inexhaustible energy. His complexion was ruddy, his hair prematurely gray, and he affected side-whiskers. His education was limited, but he had a head for business, and a prodigious memory.²² He was not given to small talk, unless it involved his circus. He had a German accent

(v for w, f for v), and lapsed into German whenever he got excited. He spoke like an uneducated man and was familiar with the street language of his day. His speech was once described as “forceful, entailing the use of more or less useless adjectives.”²³ The *New York News* once said of Forepaugh, “He will remain chiefly distinguished in circus history for

his copious, varied, and picturesquely vigorous vocabulary." In other words, he swore a lot. He was said to retire each evening at ten o'clock, winter or summer.

An anonymous reporter in Marion, Ohio, wrote of him: "He is a stubborn, hard-working, self-willed man, who has earned his fortune by the hardest kind of knocks. [He] writes a worst hand than ever Horace Greeley did, and is a millionaire . . . while wealthy, he cares nothing for society, belongs to no clubs, nor meddles with politics."²⁴

He affected a heavy, wooden stockman's cane, which he carried over his forearm. This was a carryover from his days dealing with horses and cattle. Forepaugh's treasurer, Dave Watt, called the cane "the Indicator," because of his habit of pointing it while he talked. The more excited he became in conversation, the higher he waved the "Indicator." This came in handy in August 1880 when a disgruntled employee Forepaugh had discharged attacked him, wielding a sharp-bladed dagger. Adam Jr. fired a pistol at the man, but Forepaugh Sr. beat him off with the cane.

A busy man, always in a hurry, Forepaugh was a terrible driver. According to some who shared his buggy it was an

unforgettable experience. We have found no evidence that he either smoked or chewed tobacco, unusual for that period. It was a tradition in the horse business to mark a sale with a glass of whiskey, and Adam enjoyed that ritual.

His humor was a barometer of the show's business. Curiously, he was irritable and unapproachable when business was good. Conversely, he was loquacious and joking when the weather was bad or business was slow.

In the matter of memory he only occasionally spoke of past experiences. As with so many successful men, his eye was on the future. Watt told of an incident in which there was a great deal of money in the ticket wagon, the safety for which Watt was concerned. Forepaugh told him, "You're always worrying over what you have got. Now, this loose money in the wagon here doesn't worry me at all. It's the money I haven't got that worries me."²⁵

Forepaugh was frugal, cautious, and shrewd, "close" in the argot of the time. Because of his background as a butcher he personally bought the animal meat. He was not one to be bluffed by threats from disgruntled employees. Watt tells of several incidents in which "the Governor," as Forepaugh was

The 1882 Forepaugh lot in Minneapolis featured the sideshow and other privileges like concessions.

RMA, Tibbals



called on the lot, simply offered to pay off employees who threatened to quit because of one or another dissatisfaction. The only time Forepaugh did back down was in 1886 when there were complaints by the workmen over the food in the cook tent—routinely, salt pork and boiled potatoes.

Gruff and domineering, he ruled like a despot. Employees who objected were soon gone. One writer, J. Milton Traber, characterized him as “shrewd, incisive, intense and cyclonic.” Of his contemporaries, Forepaugh most reminds us of John Robinson, whose demeanor and foul tongue were much the same.

Until 1878, the “privilege” income, a source of ready cash, went directly into Forepaugh’s pocket, without passing through the treasurer’s books. C. H. Day reported that prior to 1878 the privileges on the show were sold to outsiders. Lessees paid a flat sum per week to offer to the public a sideshow, various pit shows, the after-show or concert, and the food concessions. The payoffs went straight to Forepaugh. One day in 1879 as Day was speaking with the showman, George Middleton, who had the sideshow, handed Forepaugh a wad of money. Forepaugh explained to Day that “I never take any of the ticket money, but anything else that’s paid me I keep for myself.” Needless to say, such kickback wasn’t reported as show income.

For the first eight seasons, roughly 1867 to 1875, Forepaugh put all the profits back into the show. As a result, it grew at a steady rate, as indicated by the menagerie acquisitions. Starting with eighteen cages and the elephant Romeo in 1866, by 1875 the show boasted forty-eight cages and four elephants, and was the largest circus in the country. It netted a steady income over \$200,000, and at its peak Forepaugh valued it conservatively at \$4 million.

Forepaugh counted the admission tickets afternoon and night to make sure the number sold was mirrored by the receipts. When he remarried in 1884—Forepaugh’s first wife, Mary Ann Blaker, had died in 1872—his new wife, Mary Tallman, joined him at this task. Tallman’s devotion to Forepaugh was thorough, and she was known as a caring person to those employees who needed help. They referred to her as “Miss Mollie.”

Forepaugh was an avid reader of newspapers, mostly those of Philadelphia, and was especially interested in court affairs, perhaps because he was so often in litigation, both

as a plaintiff and as a defendant. His lawyer, one John A. Brown, must have encouraged such behavior. In one case involving the Barnum show, Barnum’s attorney made a reference to Forepaugh that was so caustic Adam later sued him for slander. In summing up his case, the attorney had said, “I know of my own personal knowledge that this man, Adam Forepaugh, has been indicted for every crime on the criminal docket, from murder down.” Barnum’s lawyer was referring to a report by the Associated Press in 1882 that Forepaugh and several of his managers were indicted for murder in Tennessee when a railroad conductor was beaten

to death by circus employees following a train wreck.²⁶ The charges were eventually dismissed. Railroad accidents were common in the late 1800s. Forepaugh suffered six in one year. The equipment was rudimentary, roadbed maintenance was not regulated, and the trainmen made mistakes. Janney’s automatic coupler (1868) and Westinghouse’s air brake (1869) solved some of these problems; litigation led to reforms.

While Forepaugh was brusque with his employees and expected them to know their tasks, he did not interfere with his managers as long as their work could be relied on. Watt characterized him as being “easy to please.” But a survey of the roster of managers over the years does not back that up. There were constant changes in every department, indicating the owner was not so easy to please. Even being a Forepaugh relative was no protection against being discharged.

Since Forepaugh left no written record of his managerial style, it is difficult to understand if he somehow drove people away from his employment or if they left because they couldn’t stand his method of management. Since so many of his employees went on to success with other shows, we are tempted to accept the first of these alternatives. Yet, we face the argument that he hired and used men until their salaries were higher than he wanted to pay. More than one commentator has said that Forepaugh had to pay high to get good men as managers because he was difficult to work for. As for his workingmen, they were apparently a scruffy lot who came and went with regularity.

An investigator for Dun & Bradstreet, the credit reporting company, said of the showman in 1880: “In business many years, he has been doing well, and made money last



Mollie Forepaugh, Adam Forepaugh’s second wife, was as likely to be seen at the front door of the circus as her husband.

RMA, Tibbals

season. He is considered good for what he buys, his estimate of worth is about \$100,000, and considered safe." And in 1881: "[He is] a very active and experienced man, and an able showman. Is well spoken of as to character and reputation, and is reported to pay all his bills promptly."

Forepaugh was a "Kentucky Democrat" in politics. He lost \$3,000 betting on Grover Cleveland—another conservative, pro-business Democrat—in 1888, and Watt kidded him about it. Miss Mollie got Watt aside and said, "For Heaven's sake, don't talk politics to Adam, for you know better than

anybody how excited he gets."²⁷

Forepaugh once said he wished he could tell the difference between a "black Republican" and a Democrat, and if he could he would not let such a Republican into his show.²⁸ The reference, of course, was to the political acceptance of black people by the Republicans. Forepaugh had little use for black people, despite the fact that African Americans were among his (and all circuses') best customers. Many whites at this time held black people in such low esteem that they did not wish to sit with them in the close proximity of

A Second Income Stream

The "privileges" have an interesting history, and it is nearly as old as the circus itself. It begins in the eighteenth century with whiskey booths. These evolved into the sale of peppermint sticks, gingerbread cakes, and lemonade. There is an 1842 contract in the files of the Somers, New York, Historical Society made between a privilege man and the June & Titus circus in which the show advanced \$300 for a span of horses, their harness, and a wagon, which sum was to be paid back out of the profits of selling candies in the tent. In other words, the privilege man paid for the "Privilege" of selling. This gave circus management some control over such selling, which they did not always have over sales by the owners of refreshment booths that followed the show, and set up near it. By the same token, outside curiosity shows set up booths and charged admission to view unusual beings—fat boys, tattooed men, two-headed calves and the like. In 1848, the John Robinson circus gathered several such exhibits together and offered the first modern sideshow, called "Ten-in-Ones" in modern parlance.

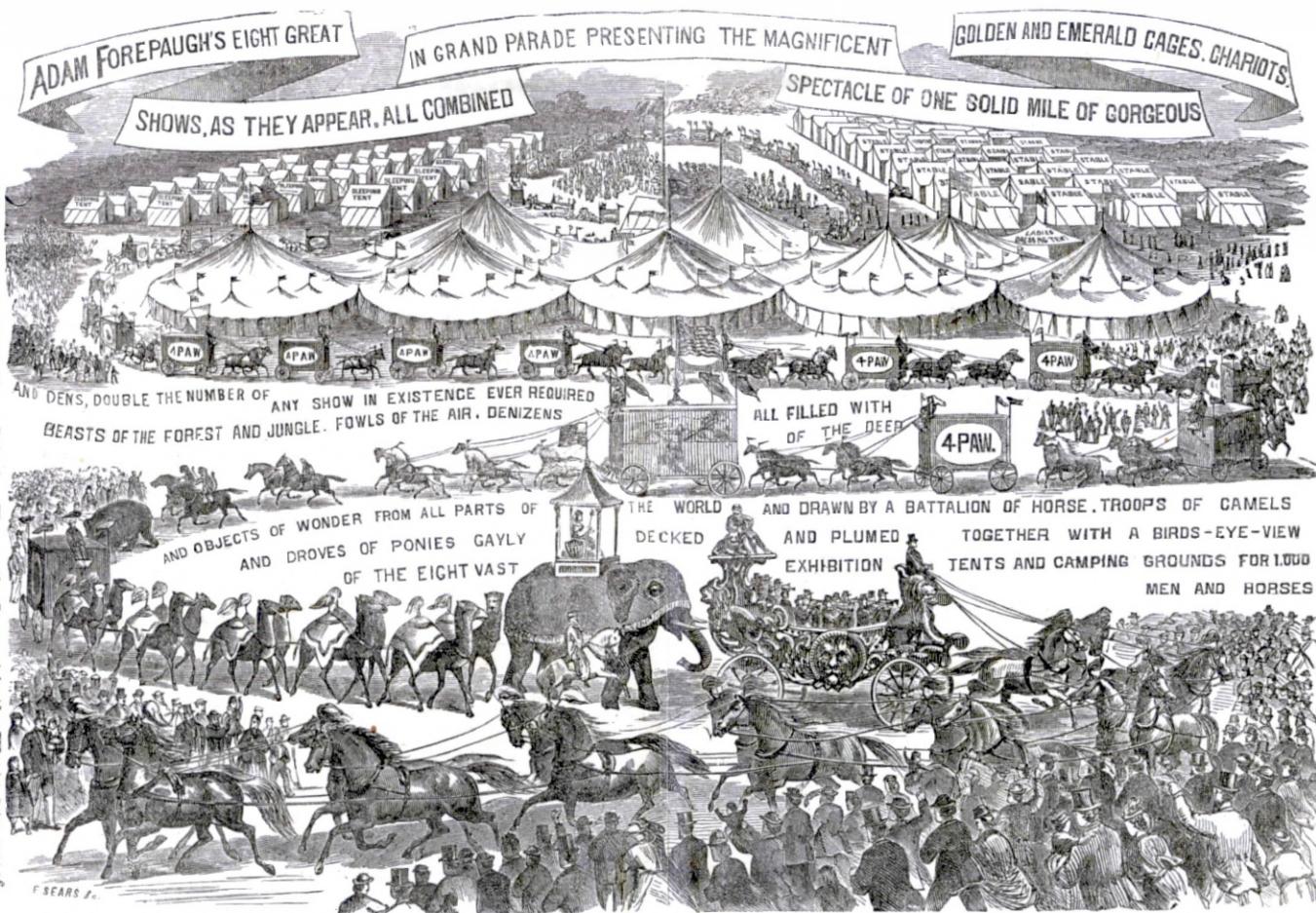
The concert, or after-show, did not appear until 1857. Originally minstrel shows, these concerts segued into a sort of vaudeville entertainment with singing, dancing and comic acts.

Adam Forepaugh first took over the concert privilege in 1877, followed by all the privileges in 1878. Since it was his show and he had to answer to no one, this system was a fine way for him to pocket cash. Because of this habit, when a season's income is given it is only the admission tickets that are being counted. Some of the other income came from charges made for laundry, for sweeping out the cars, and from ad space sold in the program. Employees were charged for the use of berths and staterooms on the train. A railroad paid \$500 to have its name painted on the water wagon that

damped down the hippodrome track. A man paid to have a ring-the-bell sledgehammer privilege. One of the clowns drew portraits of locals, and split his fees with Forepaugh. In 1888 and 1889 it became show practice to sell elephant blanket banners advertising local businesses. Finally, at each stand's end the "lot litter"—hay, straw, and paper—was raked up and sold to a livery stable operator for use as horse bedding. All these funds went into Forepaugh's pocket, a form of extramural income that bypassed the show's treasurer.

C. H. Day was the source of the preceding information. He dated it 1879. Some privileges were assigned to various department managers as a way of increasing their salary without increasing their basic pay. When John A. Forepaugh was manager of the entire circus he had as many as three privileges at once.

The fifty-cent admission to the arena was almost set in stone, so long was its history. And that's what the audience expected to pay. Competition played a part in keeping it at that level but what the ticket money bought was the performance. It paid salaries and profit. The other sources of income, mostly from privileges, provided the other stream of money. One stream was tied to the capacity of the tent (tickets), the other to the artfulness of the management (privileges). By taking the privilege money under its umbrella, management ended the parasitic relationship between outside sources and the circus proper. Again, because Forepaugh had no partners, he did not have to account for the privilege money—though he actually did. When the Forepaugh company's books went to Cooper & Bailey when it was sold in 1890, it was found that all the outside income, including "grift," was noted. By "grift," we mean the rewards of illicit activities, such as gambling and overcharging.



The Forepaugh lot as advertised, circa 1878.

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circus seating. There were few black employees on circuses in Forepaugh's lifetime. African Americans' appearance as laborers began in 1868 on the Dan Castello circus, taking down the tents and seats. However, Forepaugh would not hire them.

Despite his irascibility and closefistedness, Forepaugh was noted for providing jobs for elderly workmen who had served him over the years. When they grew too old to travel with the show he used them as watchmen in winter quarters. He hired two former rivals, Egbert Howe and Jerry Ferguson, from Howe's London and Van Amburgh & Co., respectively, as ticket takers after they were wiped out in the Panic of 1873.

Forepaugh was always with his show, keeping an eye on things. He sat at the entrance in a large camp chair and settled all questions from that position. In later years, of course, Miss Mollie was right beside him. In the nine years Watt worked for him, Forepaugh was absent perhaps three days, and failed to count the tickets fewer than a dozen times. It was common for farmers to approach him, shake hands, introduce themselves and their family, and Forepaugh was

always willing to enter into discussion of crops and weather with them. Any businessman will agree that this is the way a business should be supervised, with "the boss" always at work, and available to the public and his various managers.

Forepaugh not only kept close tabs on his receipts, he never let his money sit idle. From the time of his first employment as a butcher, Forepaugh had used his money to advantage. With six dollars of his early savings he financed a young friend in a newsstand. Later, he invested in the Widerer omnibus business, no doubt as an outlet for horse sales. But his greatest investments were in real estate. At the time of his death Forepaugh owned about two hundred houses in Philadelphia and Brooklyn.

Unlike most of his circus contemporaries, Forepaugh never divulged his receipts. These were sacrosanct to him. He thought the tendency of most showmen to overstate their income did not add a dollar to their coffers, and was a license for everyone to rob the show.²⁹ The figures used in this narrative are derived mainly from the memories of employees.

A good example of Forepaugh's business thinking lies

in the eventual conversion of his Ridge Avenue property from a circus winter quarters into a block of modest housing. The original stables for his livery business consisted of two, two-story brick buildings, 190 feet x 50 feet. From the facing streets these resembled houses even though they were built as stables. But it is easy to see a great deal of clever forethought in their construction. When Forepaugh moved the winter quarters from Ridge Avenue to the Germantown neighborhood in 1872, he had but to add walls between the two original buildings and erect wooden privies in the rear to have twenty-one housing units. He later added ten houses on the block, as well as store buildings facing on Ridge Avenue. We know of only a few circus proprietors who managed their money so well, W. W. Cole coming immediately to mind, and John Robinson being another.

In addition to real estate, Forepaugh invested in other circuses, built a theater, and financed theater companies. One of his advantages was the corps of managers provided by his own family.

As might be expected in a man of business, one with no outside interests that we can find, Forepaugh was devoted to detail. The anonymous writer of Forepaugh's obituary in the *New York Clipper* wrote: "Forepaugh could tell the number, price and place of every rope, belt, spike, pole, and strip of canvas. Given a tent of a certain diameter, he could tell offhand how many yards of canvas there were in it, its seating capacity, and how much it would cost to equip it."³⁰



The Forepaugh parade in Milwaukee, circa 1889.

RMA, Tibbals

It's entirely possible that such statements were true, though likely exaggerated. Circus management was not a complicated task, the main thing being getting to the place of performance with all the necessary equipment and leaving each night with every piece accounted for. It stands to reason that after several seasons a proprietor would learn what to watch for and what errors to avoid. Ownership by itself did not guarantee success in the daily unloading and loading; the husbanding of the parts had to be overseen. Since Forepaugh was a sole owner, as he so often advised the public, it was ultimately his responsibility that every stake and chain was accounted for twice daily.

Forepaugh took great pride in the fact that he was alone in his leadership. Most circuses were partnerships, and had been almost since the beginning of the genre. Forepaugh was one of the few "city men" in the business. Many circus proprietors came from village culture. They were predominantly from the trades, though there were performers and livery stable operators, as well as the sons of prosperous farmers, among them. Originally, managers had all been performers, a group not known for handling money judiciously. They constantly provided notes for their financing, but by the 1860s more solid business methods prevailed. Records of income and expense can be found dating to as early as the 1830s, and later, double-entry bookkeeping. Like most businesses, circus management entailed many small purchases and services. These are the kinds of expenses that, if not monitored, could eventually lead to trouble. When it became known that men of the ilk of Richard Sands (1814–1861) and Seth B. Howes (1815–1901) were able to realize 40 and 50 percent returns on their show investments, men such as John O'Brien and Adam Forepaugh, essentially capitalists, became interested. What had been a "country" pastime evolved into big business.

A man in Forepaugh's position had to deal with a wide range of personalities. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* once pointed out the gamut of circus types, from the "brainiest men" who dealt with the newspapers, the railroads, the county and municipal employees, through the self-centered athletes, to the commonest sort of laborers like shovels and lumber carriers.³¹

To say Forepaugh was as honest as the next man clouds the truth. But he was probably on par with any other showman, given that he had more property to protect. Men who knew him personally always remarked on the peculiarities of his character, which is how we remember people. Yet, none of them thought of him as being much different from the general run, neither more honest nor more venal.

George Conklin (1845–1924), the trainer and menagerie superintendent for several large circuses, related this story: "One of Forepaugh's ticket sellers, Ben Lusbie, filled the pay envelopes. Old Ad himself gave them to the men. At first

the envelopes would be short a sum so small that one would pay no attention to it. Then the shortage would gradually increase from week to week until either something would be said about it or the old man felt he had reached the limit of what the person would stand. If anyone took Forepaugh to task for the shortage, he would always say, 'Lusbie must have forgotten to put that in. I'll make him see to that.'"³²

Joseph T. McCaddon, who fell heir to the accounts of the show after Forepaugh's death, took a harsher view. In his memoir, McCaddon wrote: "Forepaugh was a rough, uncouth, and illiterate man, naturally shrewd and unscrupulous. He was unique in many ways, and highly successful in accumulating money."³³

McCaddon's description of Forepaugh as illiterate is wide of the mark, but perhaps dependent on what constituted "literate" in the writer's mind. Forepaugh's letters are not examples of either good penmanship or proper grammar. He wrote as he talked, minus the foul language. As might be expected, his missives were strictly business, straight to the point.

As for McCaddon's use of the word "unscrupulous," it was probably true. But circumstances such as countering hostile advertising may have tipped the balance between honesty and lying. In addressing the public, Forepaugh's hired writers always emphasized that he was a sole proprietor who had built up the largest circus company in the world by dint of hard work and giving the public what it wanted. It is not hard to believe this was his picture of himself. And who, other than his competitors, would argue the point? It was what he had done, and his profits were the proof.

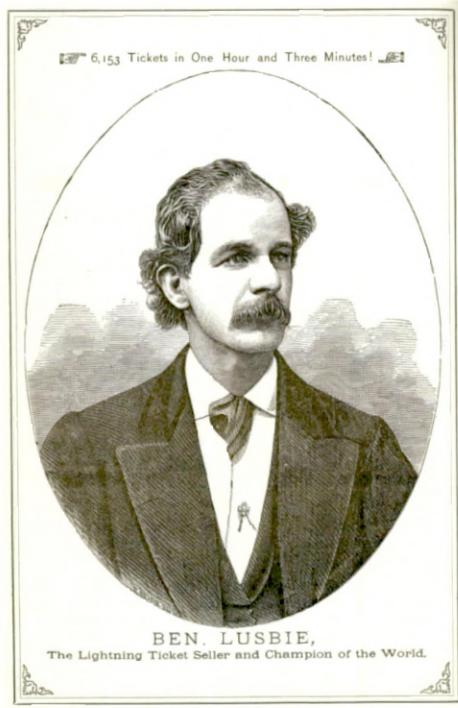
Forepaugh's focus on the menagerie is a case in point. The Forepaugh emphasis on animals could have had its basis in the fact that when he and O'Brien bought the Mabie show, they immediately acquired the second largest animal exhibition in the country. Even after the division of the 1865 Dan Rice circus, Forepaugh still owned a respectable menagerie, to which he added every season. By 1868 he even had a small menagerie with Dan Rice's Great Show in addition to his own substantial caravan of twenty-five cages.

At first, as Forepaugh knew nothing of the needs of wild animals, many died. The increase in his collection of animals, too, apparently put a strain on his ability to care for them. The *Clipper* reported in March 1868 that twenty animals had died that spring. Which show suffered this loss, or if it was a combination, wasn't indicated in the newspaper. "Despite the many contributions he has made to the zoological cemetery in Philadelphia, Forepaugh intends to run two exhibitions." The article hinted that other shows must have had better records in that regard.³⁴

Even as Forepaugh struggled to manage his menagerie's health, he made an important innovation with it. One of the problems facing circus managers of the time was accommodating that segment of the population who had moral qualms about attending something as frivolous as a show performance, yet were interested in viewing the beasts in the menagerie. So managers, aware of these attitudes, began to provide a method by which persons who wanted to see only the animals could do so. The Robinson & Eldred circus in its 1854 advertising explained that "arena exercises start at 1:30, allowing a full hour for the examination of animals, to those who do not wish to observe the sports of the ring." Some showmen let the public examine their menagerie for twenty-five cents, charging fifty cents if they also wanted to see the circus. These accommodations were made necessary by the animal cages being located in the same tent as the arena. At first, the two or three cages containing animals might be placed on one side of the ring with the seating on the opposite side. As the number of cages increased they were lined up along the outer walls of the tent, leaving a space between the back of the seats

and the beasts so that onlookers could walk about.

In 1868 Forepaugh addressed this problem by dividing his pavilion into two "apartments," likely with the use of a canvas barrier. The following year he introduced the menagerie tent as a separate entity, which he later declared as a great thing because he "had caught the church people," meaning those who found the circus acts objectionable. Forepaugh's twenty-five-cage menagerie, two elephants,



Ben Lusbie, Forepaugh's Lightning Ticket Seller was recorded as having sold 6,153 tickets in a single hour. His card was also a complimentary pass, styled after the tickets he sold.

RMA, Tibbals

and several camels quite adequately filled a second canvas in 1869.

Equipped with its divided tent, in its 1868 route the Forepaugh show took a path across Pennsylvania into the West. The season was mainly spent in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana, closing in Connersville, Indiana, where winter quarters were established at the fairgrounds. It had not been a lucrative season, according to the *Clipper*. It was cold, with a lot of rain. This made for bad roads and interfered with parading. In addition, landlords had raised their prices for hotel rooms. Very few shows made any money; many came

home considerably out-of-pocket.

Among the failed circuses of 1868 was the DeMott & Ward circus, formed by two of Forepaugh's 1867 employees, James DeMott and James Ward, who were financed by Forepaugh. George Forepaugh was sent along as the lion trainer, and Adam added one of the calf elephants imported by Stewart Craven. The circus was a failure, and Forepaugh foreclosed on property that had been offered as collateral for his backing. He then sold the property to a third party, despite an agreement not to, and eventually was sued for breach of contract by the original property owner.



Seen here in Racine, Wisconsin on June 24, 1869, Forepaugh's two tents set a new standard in presenting traveling shows around the country.

CWM

Forepaugh's chicanery cost him about \$22,000.

Forepaugh converted the Twenty-First Street and Ridge Avenue property in Philadelphia that fall from stables for his equine sales business to storage facilities for the circus. This work may have been the reason the show was wintered in Connersville. On November 14, the Roscoe Clark & Co. planing mill in Philadelphia just south of the Forepaugh property caught fire. The flames spread to a large building at the quarters, causing about \$50,000 damage. Whether this figure includes the planing mill or just the Forepaugh building isn't known. Horses and caged animals in the yard, presumably from the Dan Rice circus of that summer, were saved from the conflagration. In 1869, these animals—eight cages worth, plus a calf elephant—were leased to the Gardner & Kenyon circus for 12 percent of that show's receipts, and in 1870 they were part of the Gardner & J. Forepaugh circus. This company, with John Forepaugh as a partner, was financed by Adam, who put John Justice in as his man on the lot, just as he did Tom King in 1864.

We cite these incidents to demonstrate Forepaugh's creativity in keeping his money moving, a sure sign his capitalistic tendencies, were fine-honed. To remain only a circus proprietor was not in Forepaugh's makeup. In these same years, as noted previously, he was investing profits to enlarge his own circus.

It was at about this time that what were known as "twenty-five cent shows" arrived on the scene. These small circuses charged half the going rate for admission and presented shorter programs. Forepaugh may have pioneered the concept with Gardner & J. Forepaugh.

In our comparisons of the size of various circuses we are generally ignoring the smaller ones, of which there were many. In 1867 there were thirty-five circuses on tour; in 1868, forty; in 1869, forty-three, and in 1870, forty-eight. In each of these seasons the larger shows numbered close to a dozen and, of course, they dominated the market. The small companies stayed out of the way, if they could, and played the villages and crossroads that were beneath the notice of their larger brethren.

The Forepaugh "Aggregation," as it was advertised, was in the West in 1868, 1869 and 1870, returning to Philadelphia at the conclusion of the '70 season. The only other large show that played the western territory in those years was George F. Bailey's circus. Surprisingly, Forepaugh and Bailey avoided each other, coming no closer than a month apart in the larger cities, Chicago, Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis.

Just as was the previous year, the 1869 season was described by the *Clipper* as generally profitless. Frequent rains boosted the price of hay, and bad roads affected the price of horses because so many wore out struggling through the mud. Yet the same paper announced that Forepaugh made

money, partially through his lease of animals to Gardner & Kenyon. Forepaugh wintered in 1869-70 at the fairgrounds in Connersville, Indiana, though the circus's time there was not without incident. An apparent case of arson at the Connersville quarters on October 24, 1869, destroyed a storage building, taking with it several wagons and much wardrobe. The show had played Greensburg, Indiana, the day before and a gang of toughs had tried to enter the big top without paying. Forepaugh's people drove them off. The fire occurred the next day. No arrests were reported. The loss amounted to \$24,000, of which \$10,000 was insured.

Forepaugh's 1868 Season

Forepaugh's 1868 season is also worth noting because it is the only year for which the income and expenses are known. Given Forepaugh's propensity not to reveal such information, we do not know how the *Daily Democrat* of Fort Wayne, Indiana, came by these numbers for its March 1, 1869, issue.

We print them here, rounded to the nearest dollar.

The first group of expenses appears to be totals for the year. The "per day" figures would be multiplied by however many days were in the season.

Rental of show lots	\$2,424
Licenses	4,986
Hotel bills (90 people)	22,449
Stabling and feeding stock	27,023
Newspaper ads	3,820
Billing in towns	3,858
Billing country routes	3,086
Beef for animals (150 lbs. daily)	2,010
Subtotal	\$70,567*
Salaries for 90 people, estimated at \$250 per day	
Aggregate expenses	\$800 per day
Season's receipts	\$194,700
Excess over expenditures	\$53,100

* Sharp-eyed readers will note that the figures in this column in fact total \$69,656. The newspaper article may have factored in unlisted expenses in the bottom line.

One sign of Forepaugh's surplus, the Connersville fire notwithstanding, was his bid of \$25,000 for the James L. Thayer circus when it was auctioned in Cincinnati on November 9, 1869. The printers who had foreclosed on the Thayer show declined Forepaugh's offer, so he bid on and bought several items at the sale, including the elephant Lalla Rookh.

The circus opened its 1870 season in Cincinnati, going by railroad from there to Louisville in the second week of touring. Forepaugh had twenty-eight cages by this time, the largest menagerie on the road. His closest rival carried twenty cages.

The Gardner & J. Forepaugh circus went aground on August 15, 1870, when one of the partners foreclosed his loan. Besides Adam, four Forepaugh relatives were partners in the concern, but when the foreclosure was finalized it was revealed that he had not participated in the foreclosure. Forepaugh was quoted as saying that the salaries and printer's bill would be paid in full and that the cause of the failure was "too many horses, and not enough clowns."

Forepaugh's rationalization for the failure of Gardner & J. Forepaugh was not intended as a joke, though he may have tossed it off in a humorous way. "Too many horses" referred to the cost of the show, since the horses were always the most expensive asset; "not enough clowns" emphasized the fact that clowns were inexpensive, but necessary—"the clown being the most important personage in the show in the eyes of the rural amusement seekers."³⁵ Gardner & J. Forepaugh advertised one hundred horses, and used the two-tent layout pioneered by Adam to separate the arena and the menagerie. The claims against it amounted to \$12,000, not a small sum in those days.

In 1870 the three largest circuses on tour were John Robinson's Circus and Menagerie; G. F. Bailey & Co.'s Menagerie & Circus, and Adam Forepaugh's Zoological and Equestrian Aggregation. While similar in size, with 50 wagons and 150 horses, they each represented a different path in the continuum of the circus.

The John Robinson circus was founded in 1840 by Robinson under the title Robinson & Foster, in a partnership with the clown John Foster. Robinson himself (1807–1888) was a hired hand with various shows beginning in the early 1820s, and an advertised performer from 1832. He began as a stilt dancer and graduated to three-horse bareback riding. Over the years Robinson worked with several partners, his longest association being with Gilbert Eldred (1813–1885); their show, Robinson & Eldred, was before the public for eleven years. The final form was reached in 1856, and from then on was the John Robinson circus. It was one of the longest extant circus titles, still being used in 1933, though no longer owned by the Robinson family. John's son, John F. Robinson (1843–1921), assumed management when his father retired. It was John F. who managed the circus in the

Lions and tigers and bears! On the loose!

The Forepaugh winter quarters fire of 1868 provides a good example of the public's fear of wild animals, whose occasional escapes sent panic through the streets. When the fire was out and the firemen were leaving the grounds they were accosted by distressed mothers inquiring how many children had been eaten by the lions and tigers. In some cases the women were correctly informed that no dangerous animals had been loosed, but in others, the most exaggerated stories were told. People then went home to tell of entire families having been eaten. All the horses escaped the flames and, followed by an immense crowd of people, were taken down Ridge Avenue. Some boys went ahead, crying out that the wild animals were coming. Looking up the street and seeing the horses, the crowd followed its worst fears and fled in all directions.

current subject year of 1870. Of the three circuses we are concerned with here, only the founder, John Robinson, followed the time-honored path from performer to owner.

George F. Bailey & Co. was a partnership between Bailey, Avery Smith, J. J. Nathans, and Lewis June. They were known as the second generation of Flatfoots, the first generation being some of the menagerie proprietors of the 1830s and 1840s. They stood in a direct line from the pioneer showmen of Putnam and Westchester counties in New York and western Connecticut. Bailey (1880–1903) was the son-in-law of an early circus owner; Smith (1814–1876) was the son of another showman; Nathans (1814–1891) was an early performer, and June (1824–1888) came from a Flatfoot family.

The original Flatfoots, it was said, received their group moniker in a confrontation over routing in which they refused to back down, declaring something on the order of "We put our foot down flat, and will play New York," which seems too specific to be apocryphal. Of such flings of competitiveness are heroes made, and language passes into folklore.

The third of our examples, Adam Forepaugh, was the most modern of the three owners, being a successful businessman who transferred his knowledge from horse-trad-



Forepaugh street parade, circa 1890.

RMA, Tibbals

ing to entertainment. He had no experience with the circus before he invested in one. As with most who came after him, Forepaugh was never a performer or a descendant of one.

Our three example circuses did not cross paths in 1870. Robinson toured in the South, Bailey was principally in New England, and Forepaugh was in Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan. This peaceful situation was welcomed by the managers, as they were shielded by geography from the heavy expense concomitant with advertising battles. The day-to-day expenses of advertising, payroll, and transportation were the largest costs of operation, and advertising expenditures on those occasions when shows played near each other greatly boosted the outlay. The fact that Forep-

augh could frame two circuses and outfit a menagerie for a third must have announced to his competitors that he was a force to be reckoned with. His business experience was surely greater than most managers', who came principally from the ranks of performers, or were ex-farmers. But the specter of increased competition was already on the horizon in the form of a circus plying the Great Lakes in the wooden propeller steamer *Benton* in that same season, 1870. Dan Castello's Great Show and Egyptian Caravan was a small concern featuring government surplus camels that had been used to haul freight in the Arizona desert. The owners, Dan Castello (1836?–1901) and William C. Coup (1836–1895), soon would be heard from in a much bigger way.

Part IV

Enter Barnum

In late 1870 the two western showmen, Coup and Castello, made an overture to P. T. Barnum. They sought to induce the elderly impresario to lend his name to a circus that they hoped would be a profitable rival to Forepaugh and his ilk. To their surprise, Barnum not only agreed to the plan but became a major investor and participated in its organization. To capitalize on the new partner's name recognition, the show was titled P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, and Hippodrome. As Barnum later wrote to a friend, "I thought I had finished the show busi-

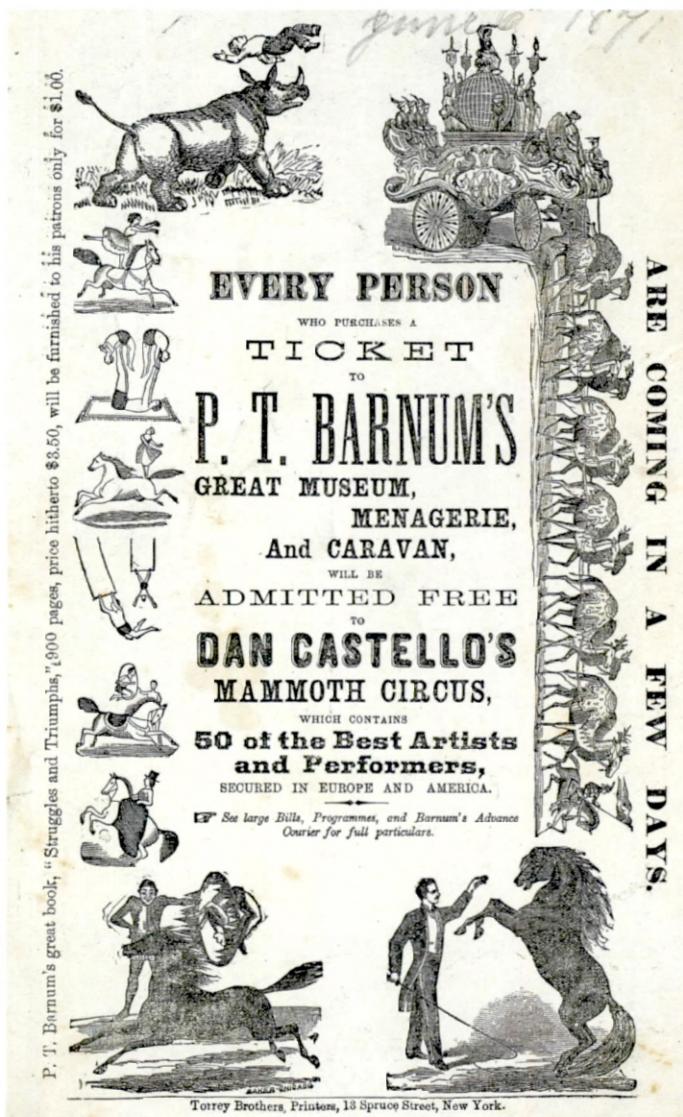
ness, but just for a flyer, I got it once more."

There were few men Coup and Castello might have approached who were better known to the public. At various times over the preceding forty years, Barnum had been involved in several field shows, beginning with Aaron Turner's in 1836. Even after the establishment of his famous American Museum in New York in 1841, Barnum found ways to keep his name associated with traveling entertainment, producing nationwide tours by such luminaries as the midget General Tom Thumb and, later, the Swedish singer Jenny Lind. In the years 1851 to 1854 he partnered with Seth B. Howes in Barnum's Museum, Menagerie and Caravan, which, while not a circus, imported eight elephants from Ceylon, the largest single group of such animals seen to that time. Although Barnum was not active in the management of the shows that carried his name, he was far from a hands-off partner, especially in the details of the advertising, which emblazoned his name everywhere. In 1866 Barnum provided curiosities from his museum that were combined with a Van Amburgh & Co. menagerie and Dan Castello's circus into a touring company that proved to be a profitable enterprise. When P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, and Hippodrome came on the scene in 1871, it was owned two-thirds by Barnum and one-sixth each by Coup and Castello, who, according to Castello, had put in \$60,000 each.

The circus portion was managed by Castello, a menagerie was imported from Europe, and there was a separately owned sideshow. The result was that the partners created the largest company in America, consisting of 175 men, 245 horses, and 95 wagons. Forepaugh and G. F. Bailey & Co., which had been the largest circuses, were reduced to second place by the new Barnum creation, which was under the management of Coup.

Coup firmly believed in the efficacy of advertising, and with Barnum's money behind him he spent lavishly. Couriers, a sort of throwaway newspaper that was placed in mailboxes, were apparently a Barnum innovation, according to A. H. Saxon, Barnum's chief biographer.³⁶

Posters, mainly lithographs by the late 1870s, had been used by circuses and menageries for fifty years. They were hung sparingly at first, but by Forepaugh's day cheaper printing technology allowed them to be broadcast widely. Forepaugh's 1870 advertising brigade was led by Joel E. Warner (1831–1914), who, accompanied by his assistant, John Justice, rode ahead in a buggy. A four-man crew pasted the



Under the management of Castello and Coup, P.T. Barnum's Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Hippodrome was a tremendous success. RMA, Tibbals

pictorials on fences and barns and erected billboards, some of which were 18 feet high and 150 feet long. As might be expected, the size of the town dictated the amount of advertising. And when two circuses crossed paths they produced a blizzard of paper as each fought for the public eye. Charles Ringling later called these events "sticker wars," times of great expense.

Barnum's 1871 travels began in New York City, where the circus was organized, and moved up the East Coast to Maine. Here it became clear that small-town Maine could not support such a large circus, so Coup led it into the "Canal Route" so attractive to circus managers, the growing cities along the Erie Canal from Albany to Buffalo. Leaving Buffalo, the troupe moved eastward through the towns in the southern portion of New York State until the show was again offered to New York City audiences. This was the same route by which Forepaugh had saved his 1867 season.

The Barnum show's season was phenomenal. Public acceptance was immediate and overwhelming. Coup had begun the year with a tent seating 5,000, and soon had to almost double the capacity. Even then, for much of the balance of the season, demand called for three performances a day. Going Forepaugh one better, the circus comprised three tents—a museum filled with specimens and artifacts from the Barnum museum, a menagerie tent, and the arena. In addition, there was a sideshow owned by the Bunnell brothers.

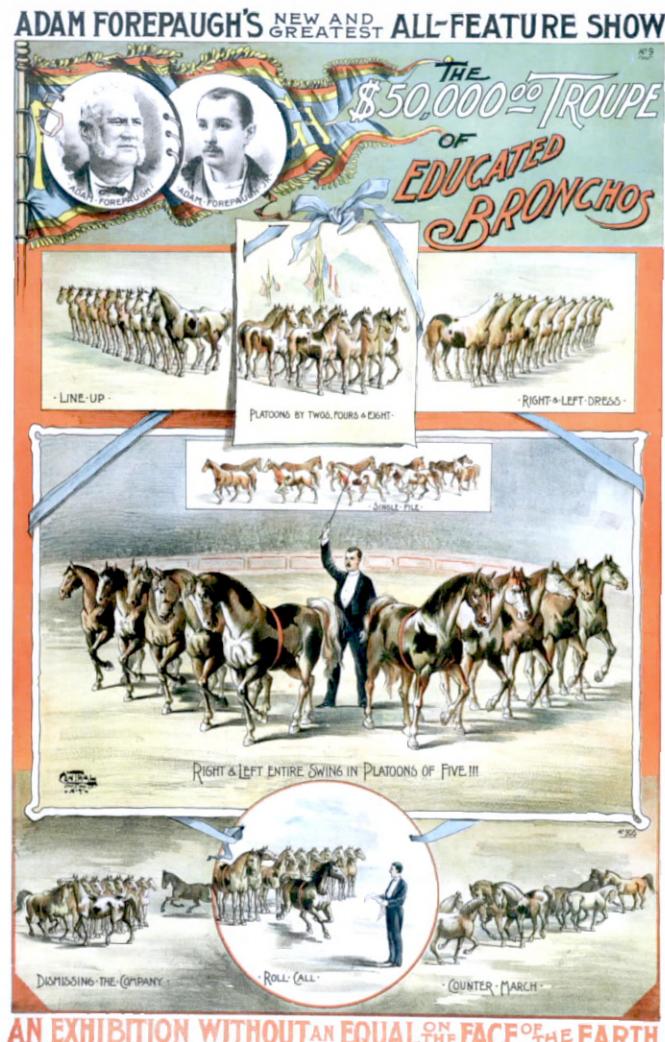
None of the parts of the show were particularly superior to those offered by other showmen. It was the size of the enterprise and the magical name Barnum that sparked its popularity. Even if the public was not quite sure what P. T. did, they knew he was famous and thus assumed his show would be worthy of their custom. It grossed \$400,000, exclusive of income from the privileges (the concert, the refreshments and the sideshow). This gross may have amounted to the largest sale of tickets in a season of any public offering to that time.

For the record, Adam Forepaugh and George F. Bailey & Co. presented only slightly smaller shows, and Forepaugh's menagerie was twice the size of Barnum's.

There were several notable newcomers to the ranks of the field shows for the 1871 season. Joel E. Warner, lately Forepaugh's advance agent, organized a three-tent caravan with the help of John O'Brien; Egbert Howes, son of Seth B. Howes, brought a group of English parade wagons to America and framed Howes' Great London Circus; and Forepaugh himself was a one-fourth owner in a new show named Rosston, Springer & Henderson. In addition, the John Robinson circus was on tour, and John O'Brien put out four separate circuses, all of medium size. The total number of traveling shows in 1871 was forty-six, though some of them were so minor as to be almost beneath notice. All

the larger shows proved to have profitable seasons. Only five shows of any size were unable to complete their tours before money problems overtook them.

Until 1873, with its devastating breakdown of the financial order in America, the early 1870s saw per capita income grow at a faster rate than at any time until World War II. Since the profits of the circus and all other amusements



Adam Jr. started in the ring as a rider and his talent for presenting horses and elephants made him a star of the show's advertising.

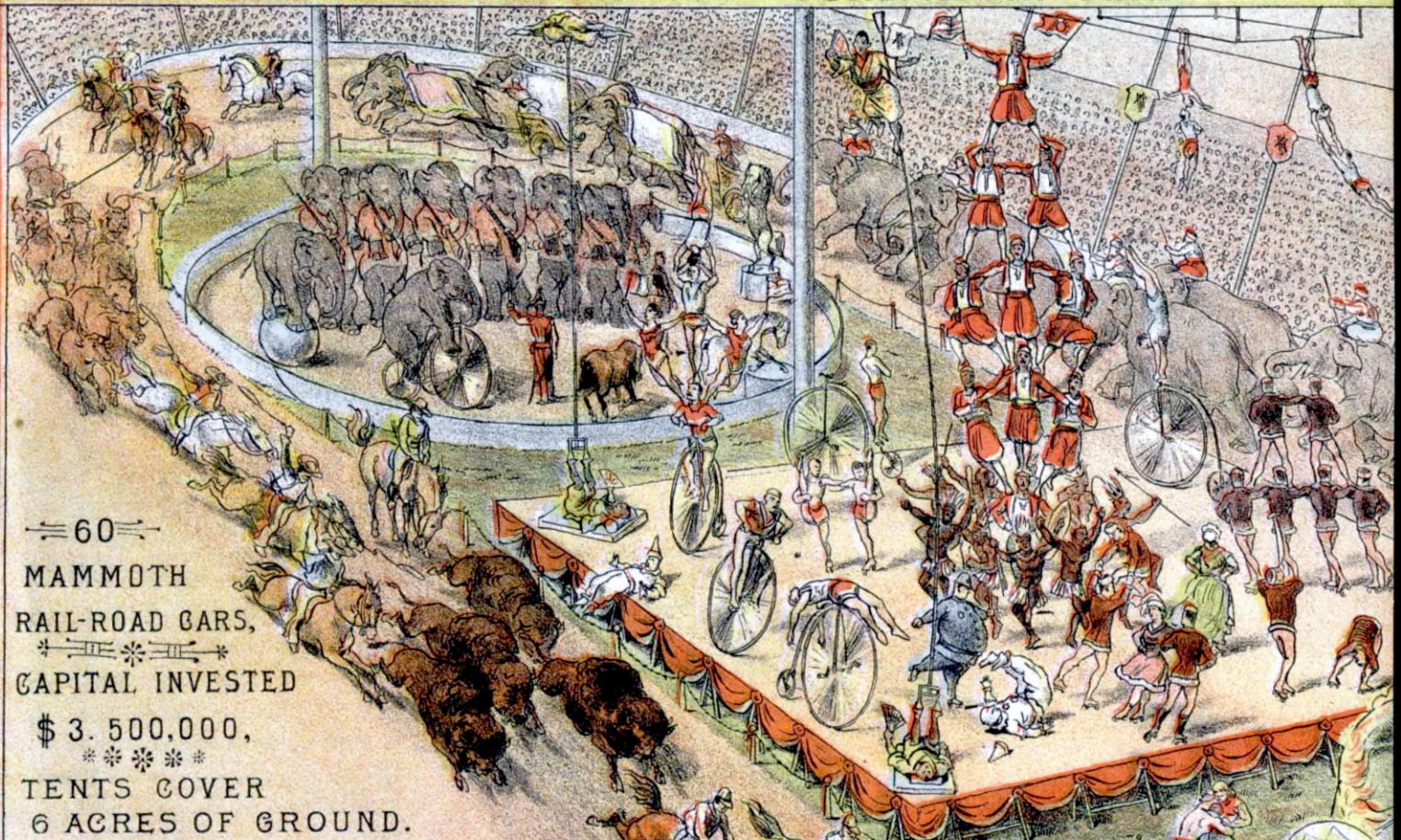
RMA, Tibbals



The bright colors of this 1886 courier brought to life the rich variety of acts presented under Forepaugh's big top. Multiple equestrian and trained animal acts fill the two rings while exotic acrobats and innovative cyclists perform on the stage. Animals, jockeys, Roman riders, and cowboys race around the track, while the top of the tent is alive with flyers.

RMA, Tibbals

ACTUAL AND ACCURATE INTERIOR VIEW OF FOREPAUGH'S MAIN TENT * THE

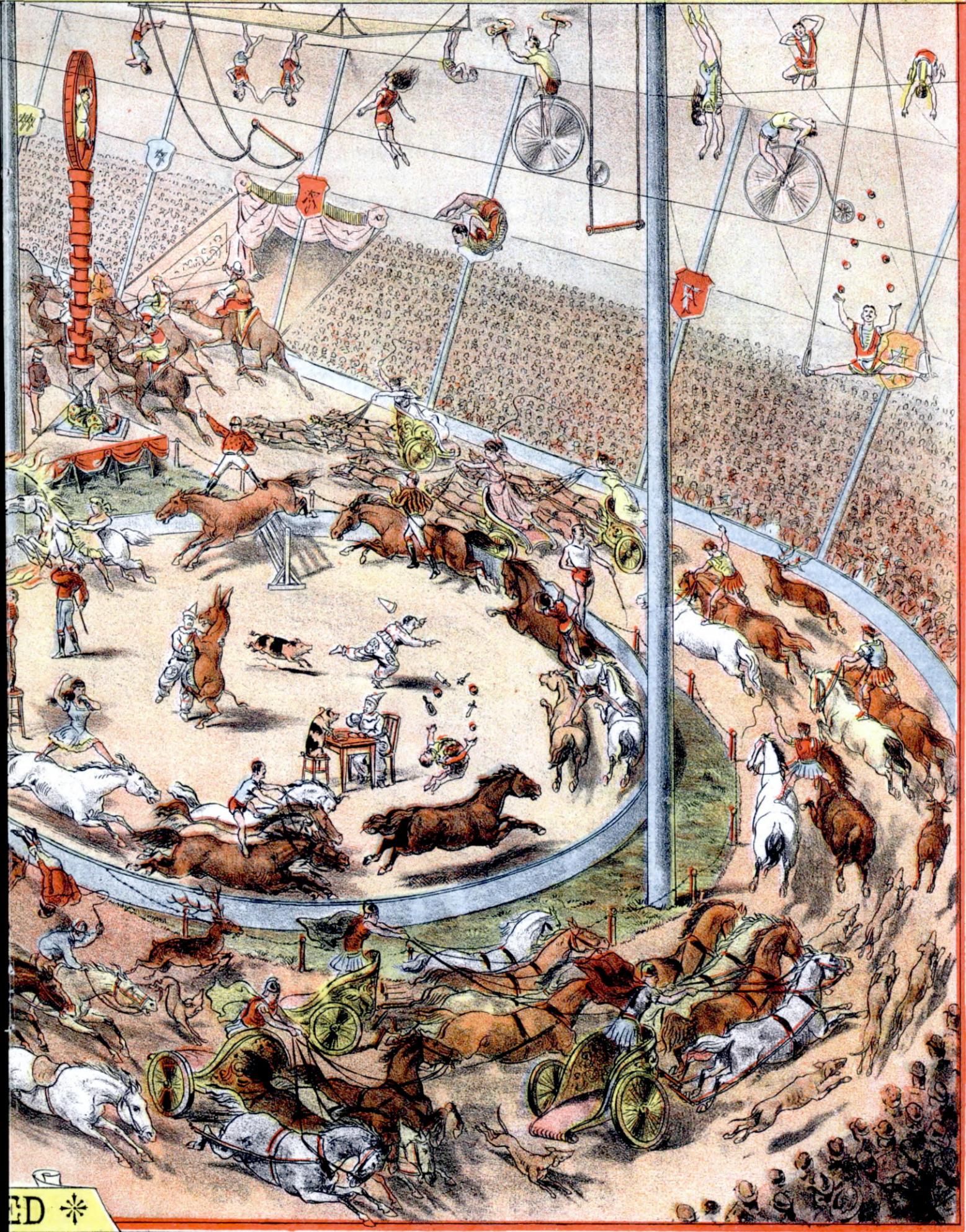


THIS ONE GREAT FEATURE, A SHOW IN ITSELF.

EXACTLY:
4 CIRCUSES,
4 MENAGERIES,
1 ELEVATED STAGE,
1 REAL ROMAN HIPPODROME,
1 AMERICAN CIRCUS,
1 EUROPEAN CIRCUS,
1 FRONTIER EXHIBITION,
80 WONDERFUL ACTS,
25 PERFORMING ELEPHANTS

* THE DREAM OF YEARS MORE THAN REALIZ.

THE LARGEST CANVAS AND THREE TIMES THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE WORLD.



ED *

depended on discretionary income it was a prosperous time for managers. With the great number of circuses on the road, it was amazing that they avoided each other. But they did. We think they must have had agreements or used covert means to find out where their rivals intended to be.

As mentioned, 1871 was the first year for three-tent circuses, but Forepaugh made do with two 120-foot round tents. Jacob Reid's privately owned sideshow accompanied him. In his menagerie Forepaugh had three elephants: Romeo and two calves. The giraffe he displayed in Philadelphia in 1867 had died, and was replaced in 1871. The family of Alexander Lowande, all competent riders, and George Forepaugh's elephant act were the main arena attractions.

The Forepaugh season opened in Washington, DC, riding on fifty railroad system cars for the trip from Philadelphia quarters to the capital. The year's route wound through Pennsylvania into Ohio and back into Pennsylvania, so there was no meeting up with the Barnum company. Forepaugh had prepared for any opposition by adding a second brigade

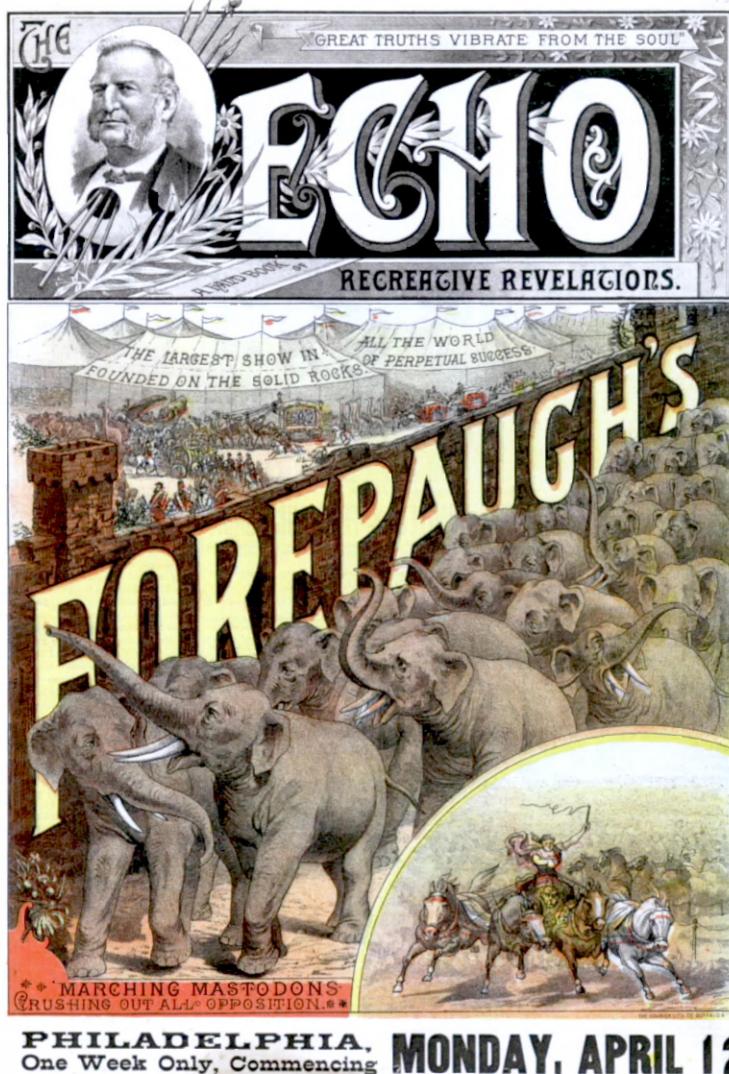
of billposters, the first time he had done so.

In Chicago, during the month of June, four different circuses sought the public's half-dollars, but otherwise Forepaugh did not have much competition in 1871.

The next year saw a great advance in circus management: the entire Barnum show was put on rails. Coup claimed it was his idea; Barnum claimed it was his.³⁷ There had been many manifestations of rail travel by circuses in the past. Most of them, because of the expense, were small affairs, a matter of a few boxcars and a coach for the personnel. None of them carried a menagerie or a sideshow or the wherewithal for a street parade. Occasionally, a complete circus used the rails to move from point to point, as we saw Forepaugh do in 1867 and 1871, but Barnum's was the first to abandon the time-honored overland travel by horse and wagon and mount a complete circus—arena, menagerie, sideshow, personnel, and horses—on rails for a full season. As Peter Sells famously said: "Eighteen seventy-two was the date of the great revolution in the circus business . . . Taking rail . . . came upon the circus fraternity like an avalanche."³⁸

Using the railroads solved a problem for the Barnum company that had been apparent their first year. Because the caravan was limited to the speed of horses pulling wagons—about five miles an hour—a great many small towns had to be played that didn't have populations large enough to fill the tent. Coup wanted to visit only towns of at least 5,000 inhabitants. By going on rails he nearly succeeded at this. We find only six towns on his 1872 route that were smaller than that. In addition, Coup advertised for fifty to seventy-five miles along railroads leading into the circus town, and arranged for excursion rates to bring people in from the surrounding areas. This innovation offset the increased cost of going from wagons to the railroad, which entailed rental of the cars and the addition of a train crew of about twenty-five men. The railroad companies were enthusiastic about the excursion concept because it filled their passenger cars on circus day. One railroad owner was heard to say he'd gladly haul the circus for nothing in order to profit from the excursion fares.

The rail experiment was an immediate success and soon copied by most of the larger shows, save one: Forepaugh remained a devotee of the horse and wagon for four more years. Even when Coup announced a gross of \$1 million in 1872, Forepaugh was unmoved. "(We) pass through the country like an invading army," he advertised. "My great show does not travel by rail. So vast are its proportions that it could not be loaded and unloaded from cars and exhibitions given daily."³⁹ To compete with Barnum's



Cover of Forepaugh's 1886 advance courier.

RMA, Tibbals

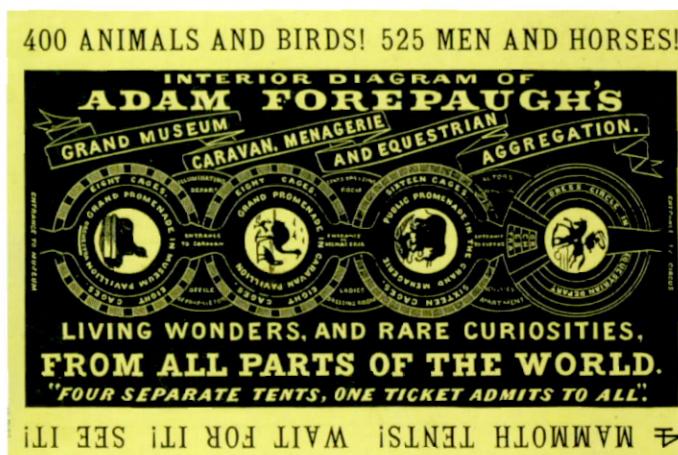
three tents, Forepaugh advertised four tents in 1872. These were the arena, the menagerie, the sideshow, and a museum of such mechanical marvels as automatons, wax figures, and moving statuary, plus fishes, birds, and insects. This group was in answer to Barnum's exhibiting objects from his former museum, and, in retrospect, was far different from the offerings of traditional circuses.

With typical hyperbole, Forepaugh advertised fictitious numbers. He claimed he had 500 wild animals, 500 horses, and \$5,000 in daily expenses. He was not alone in such bombast; all his rivals were equally guilty. The public, and especially the press, quickly learned to be skeptical of such claims, yet there was no method to counteract such rhetoric, nor is there to this day. The audience had to be urged, and this was the function of advertising. There was no precept for the advertising that heralded the circus. The writers who composed the ballyhoo were unique in their adherence to the classical, the biblical, and the scholarly portions of the language. Mixed in with the obvious blarney were the names of the performers, and this portion of the ads could usually be trusted.

Billing, the word for circus advertising, was nowhere near its peak in 1872, yet was already ubiquitous. Forepaugh again opened the season in Washington, DC, and Fred Lawrence, the advance agent, spread paper in such a prolific manner that a correspondent for the *New York Clipper* wrote: "Forepaugh salutes you overhead, Forepaugh greets you underfoot, Forepaugh clings to telegraph poles, Forepaugh flaps from chimneys."⁴⁰

The Barnum people, in preparation for their appearances in Philadelphia and Washington, placarded both cities heavily, foretelling the paper wars of the future. This season was the first time the Barnum show used the slogan that is still its trademark, "The Greatest Show on Earth."

The Forepaugh Aggregation, as it called itself, was also on the railroad, on leased cars, beginning the 1872 tour.



Forepaugh employed the Aggregation title as an umbrella term to suggest the range of attractions. RMA, Tibbals

The Aggregation traveled from Washington to Baltimore, to West Virginia, to Pittsburgh and Allegheny City, and ended up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on April 29. From there it proceeded overland on another tour of western states. Barnum followed the Aggregation into the West, going into Ohio and Indiana. The shows almost met head-on for the first time on August 29 in Bloomington, Illinois. Both shows had announced their intention to play there, but at the last minute Forepaugh blinked, and Barnum carried the day.⁴¹ It's possible that Forepaugh's advance crew, upon entering Bloomington, saw Barnum's posters and alerted the boss. Forepaugh was apparently not yet ready for a contest with the larger show. With its three performances a day, its huge crowds, and its magic name, the Barnum circus was not something to treat lightly. In retrospect, it seems Forepaugh was wise to go instead to El Paso, twenty miles north of Bloomington. He had nothing to gain by trying to outdo the rival, and could have suffered an embarrassing loss of face if Barnum outdrew him.

With the addition of his own museum features and the sixteen parade wagons needed to haul them, Forepaugh's 1872 street parade was the largest in the country, featuring also the great elephant Romeo, the largest elephant in the United States, who carried a howdah on his back with an eastern "princess" aboard.

Coup's 1871 complaint that playing small towns was not worth the trouble was borne out by Forepaugh's late 1872 experience in Indiana. A commentator noted that towns as small as 500 residents just could not fill the tents. Consequently, the Forepaugh stock and wagons were sent to Connersville for the winter, while the rest of the Aggregation went to Philadelphia.

Despite the success of the Barnum and Forepaugh companies, 1872 was not considered a prosperous season in the history of the American circus. Ten of forty-five shows closed early. The weather was variable, with many thunderstorms and a late spring followed by very hot weather, especially in the West. In addition, it was a presidential election year, always detrimental to the entertainment business because it drew public attention away from frivolity. However, Barnum reported the first million-dollar gross in history, and Forepaugh was said to have netted a profit of \$100,000.⁴²

On October 9, 1872, Forepaugh bought the two-thirds of the Rosston, Springer & Henderson circus that he did not already own. This had been a successful two-year operation, a 150-horse, twenty-cage show. Forepaugh's plan was to add twenty cages for 1873 and send it out under John A. Forepaugh's management. As events transpired, Forepaugh instead sold it to Montgomery Queen, an old friend from his horse trading days.

More importantly, in late October, Forepaugh paid \$36,000 for thirty-six acres in the Germantown section of

Philadelphia, intending it for a new winter quarters. The purchase consisted of vacant land fronting on Duys Lane (now Wister Street). Construction of three buildings for the circus and six dwellings began immediately.

On December 1, 1872, Forepaugh's wife, Mary Ann Blaker, died of consumption after a two-year illness, leaving the twelve-year-old Adam Jr. for her husband to raise. She was thirty-seven years old. Forepaugh would be a widower for twelve years.

The year 1873 had all the earmarks of a great season. From the beginning, *Clipper* correspondents reported large crowds at all the major circuses. The public had money and was willing to spend it. So great was the press of business that time after time, ticket wagons had to be closed early. Forepaugh opened in Washington, followed by a week in Baltimore, and he experienced full tents every day. John O'Brien was right behind him in those same cities and had similar success. The Barnum show, after a prosperous April at the American Institute building in New York City, moved into New England, where it was greeted by overflow audiences.

As he had in each of the previous three seasons, Forepaugh mounted his circus on rails in the early weeks. He returned to wagon travel after a week's run in Chicago on May 17. He had two reasons for doing this. By using the railroad he placed his show in the western states more quickly than could his eastern rivals, and he avoided the wet roads and rising rivers of spring. Indifferent roads and unstable bridges were the bane of wagon travel in the western states.

For this season the Forepaugh Aggregation traveled with two 100-foot round menagerie tents, and two museum tents that same size. In addition, there was a larger big top (130-foot round with one 40-foot middle piece) yet still with but one performance ring. With fifty-three cages and forty baggage wagons, the show claimed to have four hundred horses, probably because Barnum advertised three hundred. The two firms were roughly equivalent, with one important difference: Barnum had added a second ring.⁴³

The additional ring was meant to combat the problem of crowd control. In the one-ring format, seats circled the ring curb and were erected right to the edge. Every seat had the same good sight lines. The hippodrome track encircling the outside of the ring originated with Franconi's Hippodrome of 1853. On this track, pageants could pass and races be performed. However, as the tents were lengthened to hold more spectators, those in the end seats were pushed farther from the ring. They would stand on their seats or push forward in the aisles, blocking the view of people farther down, who in turn would stand on their seats. It is in this period that we first find the admonition, "Down in front!"

Barnum, according to Castello, asked what could be

done, to which Castello replied they should go to two rings. If they did this and presented similar acts in each ring, he reasoned, the audience would gain nothing by moving.⁴⁴ The upshot was the two rings surrounded by the hippodrome track, which became the standard (three rings would come in 1881). Castello, as ringmaster, sat between the two rings and signaled the beginning and end of each act by ringing a bell, which also cued the music.

Fortunately for that season's receipts, the Panic of 1873, which began in September with the collapse of the banking firm Jay Cooke & Co., occurred late in the outdoor touring season, so its effect was felt more in the ensuing years. In January 1874 the *Clipper* published a list of the circus managers who had lost money in the Cooke debacle. There were many, but they didn't include Adam Forepaugh. This was the beginning of one of the longest-lasting economic de-

LIST OF
WILD ANIMALS, RARE BIRDS
AND
WONDERFUL CURIOSITIES
TO BE SEEN IN
ADAM FOREPAUGH'S



Let the lawful circle of amusement be acknowledged. Let us protest against any ascetic denunciation of it, or any confounding it with frivolity or vice. Let it be elevated into the sacredness of an ordinance established in the conditions of our nature, and as

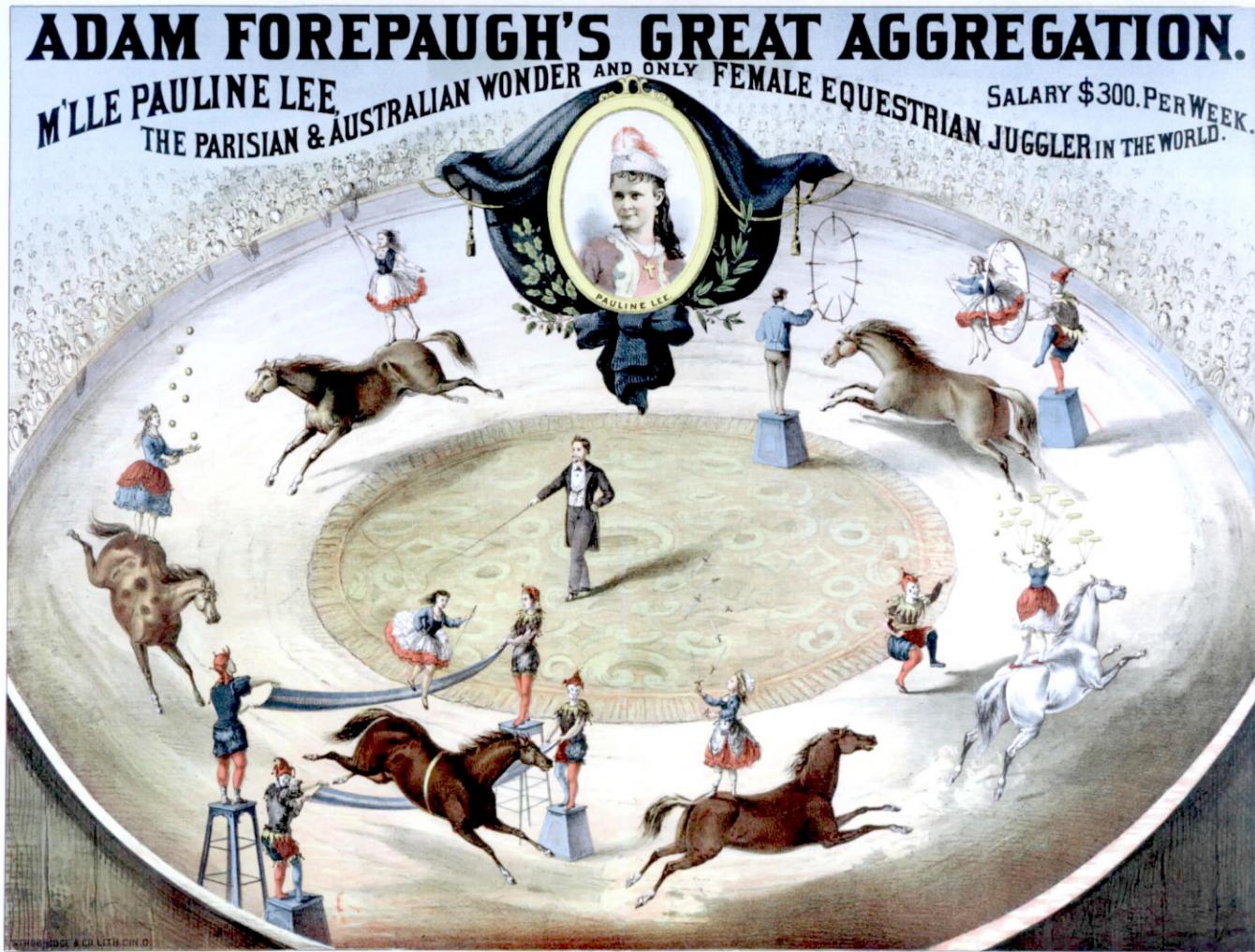
such to be heeded by the laborer in his toll, the merchant in his counting-room and the student in his closet. And let not the pulpit keep back its word of encouragement from a false expediency or a fear of the other extreme.—Rev. Henry Ward Beecher.

GREAT MORAL, NATIONAL, UNABRIDGED AND UNAPPROACHABLE
DOUBLE MUSEUMS AND MENAGERIES
EXHIBITED IN CONNECTION WITH HIS GIGANTIC
EQUESTRIAN AGGREGATION,
UNDER A COMBINATION OF
EIGHT CENTRE-POLE TENTS,
PREPARED BY A FEW FACTS RELATIVE TO THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THESE VAST ESTABLISHMENTS, TOGETHER WITH THE NAMES AND SPECIALTIES OF THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS AND ACTRESSES ENGAGED FOR THE SEASON OF 1874, THE SAME BEING ITS
EIGHTH ANNUAL TOUR OF AMERICA.

PRESS OF WARREN, JOHNSON & CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

Forepaugh's 1874 Aggregation promised a vast menagerie, strange curiosities, and unique artifacts along with its performance.

RMA, Tibbals



Pauline Lee was a featured rider on the show in 1879.

RMA, Tibbals

pressions in American history; some aspects of it were still apparent as late as 1881. Wage scales were high in 1873, but fell steadily in the decade to follow.

At the time the Panic occurred, a principal performer—one whose name appeared in advertising—made \$50 to \$150 per week. Supporting types made \$20 to \$50. Tumblers, leapers, and acrobats were given \$25 to \$100 and were expected to “blacken up” for the sideshow and assist with the canvas. Clowns were paid \$40 to \$150 a week. The show paid for all employees’ meals, hotel rooms, and laundry.⁴⁵ As mentioned previously, on many shows payment of salaries was directly dependent on the sale of tickets, and when custom was thin, the pay envelopes were, too. This did not happen on the larger shows, however. We find no instance when Forepaugh or Barnum or their ilk failed to make their payrolls.

The Forepaugh circus had moved into its new Ger-

mantown winter quarters at the end of the 1872 season. The 1873 tour ended in Pennsylvania on October 25, and the equipment and animals shipped back to Philadelphia. The usual custom was to board the horses on area farms over the winter and provide heated quarters for the menagerie. A skeleton crew was retained to care for the animals and begin repairs to the wagons for the next season.

On December 20, 1873, the winter quarters caught fire, causing \$91,000 damage. Only \$30,000 was covered by insurance. The show’s horses had been farmed out and the menagerie, housed in a stone building a hundred yards from the fire, survived. Rebuilding began immediately. Forepaugh bought land south of Girard College for yet another new winter quarters, though he never used it for that purpose. With his penchant for building housing, Forepaugh had no qualms about collecting real estate.

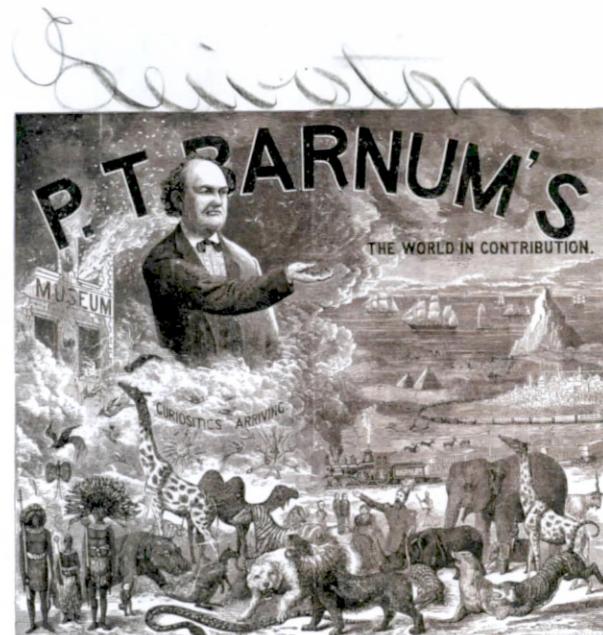
In 1874, Barnum went off on a tangent and presented a

show unlike any seen since 1851. In his own words, he had “a long cherished plan of exhibiting a Roman Hippodrome, Zoological Institute, Aquaria, and Museum of unsurpassed extent and magnificence.”⁴⁶ The result, P. T. Barnum’s Great Roman Hippodrome, was on tour in 1874 and 1875. It was not a circus in the purest sense, but an exhibition of parades, races, and spectacles with some circus acts appended. In its first year it traveled to only six cities—New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. It was very successful, attracting turnaway crowds wherever it appeared. In the long run, however, it may have been a mistake on Barnum’s part, for it allowed Forepaugh’s show to become the largest circus in the country, a position he was to defend vigorously in 1875. This may well have been a case where the visionary suffered, and the traditionalist triumphed.

Forepaugh returned once again to the western states in 1874, after visiting Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and Pittsburgh by rail. At Fort Wayne, Indiana, on May 4, the show reverted to horses and wagons to tour Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa—Forepaugh’s first venture beyond the Mississippi, a matter of three weeks. This was the second time the circus had used Fort Wayne as a conversion point; it would not be the last, because the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne & Chicago Railroad, part of the Pennsylvania system, had a large marshaling yard there. Forepaugh returned to Fort Wayne at season’s end to take the rails back to quarters in Philadelphia.

In response to Barnum’s dramatic move into the “Hippodrome,” Forepaugh spent lavishly on his 1875 edition. He enhanced his parade with new tableau wagons, new cages, and four elephants that also appeared in the ring under the guidance of Adam Jr. The menagerie featured a rhinoceros and a hippopotamus, and forty-eight cages of beasts. However, the show used only two tents, a 140-foot round for the one-ring arena, and a 100-foot round with six 50-foot inserts for the combined museum and menagerie. Thirty-eight baggage wagons were needed to haul it, and the museum added another fourteen. With the cages, this meant a hundred vehicles and three hundred horses. This immense “train” truly “advanced like a great army,” just as the ads proclaimed. As it passed through the countryside at night and in early morning, farmers built bonfires so they could watch the procession pass their homes. It took twenty to thirty minutes from beginning to end.

Because Barnum had leased his 1873 property to John O’Brien, who toured it in 1874 under the name P. T. Barnum’s World’s Fair, Forepaugh began advertising that his show had never been divided, clearly implying that Barnum’s was. The public was assured that for their fifty-cent admissions they saw every portion of Forepaugh’s “Aggregation,” while Barnum presumably exhibited but part of his holdings. Forepaugh pushed this advantage heavily for the



Great Traveling World's Fair.
THREE TIMES LARGER THAN EVER.
Twenty Shows Consolidated. Three Performances Daily.
FULL MENAGERIE FREE OF CHARGE.

100,000 Curiosities: 1500 Animals, Birds, Sea Lions, and other Marine Monsters; 150 Railroad Cars; Procession 3 Miles Long, at 9 every morning; the great \$20,000 Talking Machine; 12 Golden Charlots, 100 Cages and Vans; 4 Bands of Music.
ADMISSION TO ALL, ONLY 50 CENTS. CHILDREN, HALF PRICE.

For Tickets free to all who buy Mr. Barnum's great 680 page book; reduced from \$3.50 to \$1.50.

Pogey O'Brien managed P. T. Barnum's World's Fair for one season in 1874.
RMA, Tibbals

rest of his life. He was the man who had no partners, his show was not divided, and his investment in circus property was the greatest of any man’s in America.

With so many employees, the Forepaugh circus established a cook tent on the grounds, though the staff and the performers still slept and ate in hotels. Both ring stock and baggage horses were tented on the lot. There was even a blacksmith tent.

The Barnum and Forepaugh shows were primed to square off for the first time in Philadelphia in April 1875. But weather tempered what had promised to be a major battle. First came snow, then rain. Forepaugh reported adequate sales, but Barnum lost two days when his tent collapsed under the weight of snow.

Forepaugh moved on to lead his forces through New Jersey and New York, entering Canada in June 1875. He was there until September 3, when he returned through Vermont to New York State and so on down to Philadelphia.

The 1875 season was not auspicious. The weather in the West was generally wet. The effect of the Panic of 1873 was widespread. The economy was in the doldrums and the news was filled with bankruptcies and foreclosures of all

types. Estimates of ruined businesses in the country ran as higher than 18,000, including more than a hundred bankrupt railroads. However, of the thirty-eight circuses on the road, all but five were able to finish their tours, indicating there was indeed some business to be had. Forepaugh had his most successful stand in Montreal, where he increased performances to three a day.

The generally tough conditions of 1875 were but a foreboding of 1876, when the thirty-eight circuses of the previous year were reduced to thirty. And, according to the *Sunday Mercury*, half of these didn't finish the season.⁴⁷

Despite the bad economy, or perhaps because of it, the circus generated increasing amounts of hype. In presenting his persona to the public, Forepaugh, as did all his rivals,



Forepaugh and Barnum were commemorated in posters printed by Courier Company around 1892.

used professional writers. And while obviously he could control what they wrote about him, it was unlikely that he cared to tone down their plaudits. The writers' job was to advance the circus as the greatest thing ever brought before the public, and, by association, their employer was presented as a great benefactor of the people. By amassing all the wonders that traveled with Forepaugh's circus, the owner himself became part of the gift, and his name was put forth with increasing regularity.

In reading the newspaper comments, one is told that Forepaugh's circus has this and that, as if the owner himself

were the source of all wonders. This was partly convention; it was easier to say Forepaugh or Barnum or Seth B. Howes did it than to explain how the attractions were garnered from dealers, agents, and other sources.

It was also misleading to think Forepaugh squared off directly against Barnum; P. T. was not that much involved. It was William Coup and Dan Castello, and later George F. Bailey and his partners, and still later James A. Bailey, all Barnum managers, with whom Forepaugh contended. It was they who made the decisions that Forepaugh had to counter. Forepaugh and Barnum sometimes met, and Forepaugh was known to twit the older man about how little he actually knew about circus management. Barnum admitted to this, once telling a newspaper reporter, "I'd burst up



RMA, Tibbals

in a year if I undertook to manage a circus. I don't know anything about the details."⁴⁸ However, to the public, it was Barnum's show. He owned it and he ran it, and, to his credit, it was a success.

Despite the fact that theirs were the leading circuses in the country, Barnum and Forepaugh were vastly different in personality. Barnum consortied with professors of natural history, paleontologists, and ministers. He lectured at length. He was a man of the world, widely traveled, and, although he presented himself as a father figure, he was, in reality, aloof from common people. Barnum's homes were

great wooden temples, showcases of his wealth. Forepaugh, quite possibly wealthier than his rival, was still a butcher and a horse dealer at heart. While Barnum had an agreement with Coup and Castello to appear at the circus on occasion, Forepaugh sat at the door of his establishment and could be approached by the public. He checked the tickets every day, oversaw the payment of wages, inspected the meat served to man and beast, and bought and sold horses.

Barnum was formal in dress. Forepaugh usually stripped to his vest and wore work pants and boots. Their language also was different: Barnum had command of English, while Forepaugh spoke with a German accent and was known for his use of street language and his poor grammar. Barnum had social pretensions; Forepaugh, none that we know of. His show was his passion and his pride, and whatever vain-glory Forepaugh expressed, it was that his circus was the largest and best. And this was often true.

In matters of conscience, Barnum was active in the Universalist Church. Forepaugh, though baptized a Lutheran, wore Christianity's mantle lightly, if at all, and considered "the church people" as separate from himself. It is telling that he left nothing to religious charity when he died.

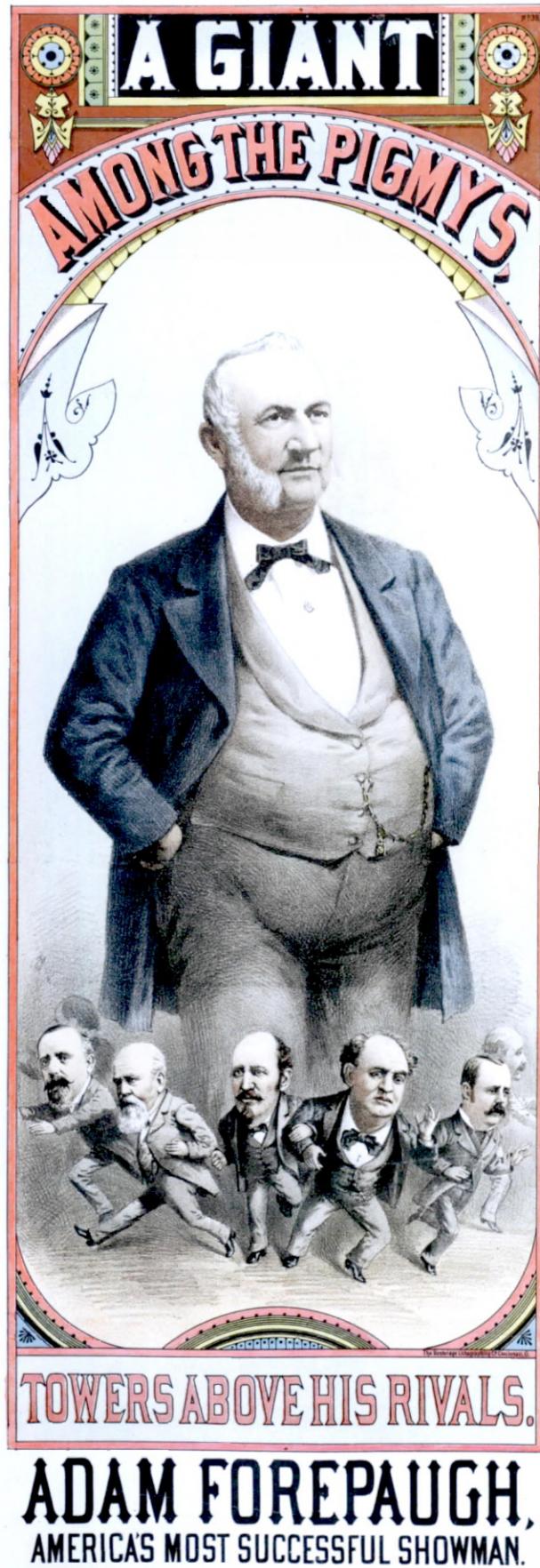
The matter of virtue in their public relations was the same for each. Typical showmen, their advertising overreached. There was a great deal of underhanded activity on the show grounds, some condoned and some not, but neither man could control all the activities of so many employees. In his personal dealings, Barnum was sternly honest. Forepaugh, since he was so litigious, often approached the shadows of illegality. Barnum, a New Englander, believed in the sanctity of contracts. Forepaugh, with his horse trader's mentality, bore watching.

The two men shared a common belief in risk-taking. We must assume most circus owners concurred in this. To invest a half million dollars in a proposition dependent on the public's taste for entertainment and the benevolence of the weather might seem folly. But Forepaugh and Barnum were aiming for high returns. Profits of 40 and 50 percent were not out of reach for showmen as early as the 1840s. It was in cash, and it was not taxed.

Even within the ranks of showmen, these two risk-takers stood out. When Forepaugh paid Dan Rice \$25,000 for twenty-five weeks in 1865 and 1866, and when Barnum framed a ninety-five-wagon show in 1871, their downfall was predicted; through such careless expenditures, it was expected, their families would go without bread. But when Barnum's partners reproved him for his expected outlay in 1872, he immediately announced that he was going to

This Strobridge print was among the lithos produced at the height of the paper wars between the major circus owners, circa 1882.

RMA, Tibbals



increase the figure. And when Forepaugh found that his modus operandi led to disagreements with his managers, he didn't change it. Instead, he simply paid the high dollar necessary to hire competent help. These were the marks of men confident enough to ignore conventional wisdom.

It is not possible to be sure what each man thought of the other. Forepaugh's treasurer David Watt tells of a meeting between Barnum and Forepaugh on Forepaugh's lot in 1886. When Watt asked how the meeting went, Forepaugh replied, "I counted my elephants every day while he was here," much as a hostess might count spoons after a dinner party. In a letter to James A. Bailey, his partner in 1888, Barnum confided that Forepaugh didn't get the gentry as customers, and that he didn't seem to want them.

If either man was a dreamer, it was Barnum. In 1874 he brought forth, against his partners' advice, the idea of the vast Hippodrome, transcending the traditional circus to create the idea of spectacle for its own sake. He eschewed much of the ring performance in order to present a version of paraded history, races on the hippodrome track, and "The Field of the Cloth of Gold," a reenactment from the time of Henry VIII. The Hippodrome had a limited route among large cities in its first season, but changed to daily stops in the second year, 1875. It was part circus, part exposition—and all destined to fall under the general economic malaise at the end of 1875. It was then that W. C. Coup and Dan Castello parted ways with Barnum. To be fair about eval-

uating the Hippodrome as either a success or a failure, one must remember that it traveled in the teeth of the Panic of 1873.

Forepaugh, on the other hand, stayed with what had made him wealthy: the traditional circus of the preceding eighty years, with the proven popularity of its athletic performances and a caged menagerie. It can be said that Forepaugh changed little about the circus except in matters of size and income, and even at that he was matched fairly evenly by the Barnum partners. While Barnum experimented with the Hippodrome, Forepaugh seized the chance to become the largest field show in the world.

Inexpensive advertising allowed these two egotists to turn their publicity men loose, plastering Forepaugh's and Barnum's images on every wall and fence their billposters could reach. "You Know Me," Forepaugh exclaimed in print, "A Giant Among the Pigmies." Barnum claimed for himself "The Sun of the Amusement Empire."

When either man advertised an attraction as "The Only," he meant that the other didn't have one. The rivalry produced some of the great moments in field show history, which we shall witness in this march of seasons.

Was there a victor in all this contention? Until Forepaugh's death in 1890, he was able to counter almost every suggestion Barnum's partners put forth as a claim to superiority. But he couldn't surpass the fame of Barnum's greatest asset: the name Barnum.

Part V

Taking to the Rails

Forepaugh faced a new team of executives on the Barnum circus in 1876. W. C. Coup and Dan Castello had resigned, each taking a profit of \$75,000. Barnum turned to the so-called "Flatfoots" for his new managers.⁴⁹ These gentlemen were George F. Bailey, John J. Nathans, Lewis June, and Avery Smith. Experienced show owners, these second generation Flatfoots had been worthy opponents of Forepaugh, though they were all near the end of their careers when they signed on as Barnum partners. Indeed, they retired when their contracts with him expired.

The Flatfoots were of the older school of managers and therefore more conservative in their approach. For example, they returned the Barnum show to one ring from the two it had used in 1872 and 1873. To avoid the problem of crowd control with this configuration, they went back to a smaller tent. This kind of retrenchment seems out of kilter with Barnum's previous emphasis on changing from the time-hon-

ored circus dynamic to the presentation of spectacle. His new partners obviously thought the old ways were best.

This retrenchment in the Barnum-Forepaugh rivalry ushered in an era in which quality took a back seat to quantity. Unable, or unwilling, to tinker with the traditional presentation of athletic skills, the managers turned to the expansion of the physical plant. Emphasis was focused on the numbers of tents, of elephants, of other exotic animals, of parade vehicles—just as the Barnum show had done in 1871 with its museum attractions. Competition for ever more spectacular novelties grew apace, and beginning about 1880, it ushered in what is generally accepted as the golden age of the American circus.

Despite the intense competition between the leading circuses, business was flat in 1876. It was another election year and, for many, the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia took precedence over circus visits. Several shows set up

in Philadelphia, hoping to cash in on the Centennial audience, but they were generally ignored. Of the thirty companies on the road that spring, fourteen failed.⁵⁰ The 1876 and 1877 seasons, reflecting the effects of the Panic of 1873, were the lowest point in show formation since 1861.

In 1876, after two weeks in Philadelphia on three separate lots, Forepaugh returned to the Midwest. He too may have been trying to capitalize on early visitors to the Centennial Exhibition. As in past years, Forepaugh mounted his circus on rails to reach Pittsburgh, Allegheny City, and Cleveland, and from there began his wagon tour. The season was spent primarily in Michigan and Ohio, with the last month in Pennsylvania. The announced plan was to spend the final two weeks on the lot at Forty-Second Street and Girard Avenue in Philadelphia, but poor business led to cutting the final stand to one week.

By its issue of May 20, 1876, the *New York Clipper* was predicting that the Centennial was ruining the circus season. In fact, 1876 was the only money-losing season Fore-

augh ever experienced. This may well have convinced him to change his method of operation.

The February 10, 1877 *Clipper* reported that the Forepaugh Aggregation would be mounted on rails for the whole of that season. Whereas "the Governor" had advertised as recently as 1872 that his show was too large to use the railroads, Forepaugh had come to realize the efficacy of technological progress. He bought a train of thirty cars—stocks and flats each measuring 40 feet long, with longer sleeping cars and an advertising car—from Barney & Smith of Dayton, Ohio. These were 8 feet longer than Barnum's cars, perhaps on purpose, but Barnum's train, composed of forty-five 32-foot cars, was still about 20 percent longer. Later, in 1884, Forepaugh's train was pronounced "the best in the country."⁵¹ It cost him \$40,000. Historian Fred Dahlinger, Jr. has suggested that the reason Forepaugh waited five years to join the railroad-mounted fraternity of owners was because of caution related to the Panic of 1873.

The reason for switching to rails became evident when



Elephants beside the stock cars of the Forepaugh show, circa 1880.

RMA, Tibbals

it was announced that the Forepaugh circus was going to California. Adam's friend and fellow showman, Montgomery Queen, had taken his show to the West Coast in 1874 and enjoyed success there. That may have influenced Forepaugh. The unrewarding business in 1876 made him doubly receptive to the idea of touring California. Unfortunately, 1877 was the year of the Great Railroad Strike. Some trains were attacked by strikers, schedules were no longer guaranteed, and the railroad companies denied protection to their freight customers. As a result, circuses sometimes had to move their personnel by regular passenger service, and hire armed guards to protect their property.

Forepaugh's 1877 route was not well covered by the *Clipper*, and we think it was because the showman was unhappy with that journal. Without proof, we offer the following events as a possible explanation. In the February 17, 1877 *Clipper*, Forepaugh announced the birth of an elephant at his Germantown winter quarters on February 1. However, a *Clipper* correspondent reported that it was an advertising dodge and insisted there had never been an elephant birth in captivity anywhere.⁵² Unwilling to accept this act of journalism, Forepaugh came back in March to insist he did have a baby elephant and invited a *Clipper* representative to quarters to inspect it. This led the anonymous correspondent to state that he had spoken with a knowledgeable elephant man who said the infant in question had been purchased by Forepaugh and was a year old. This ended any mention of the show in the *Clipper* until August 1877. A St. Louis paper later reported the baby elephant, named Chicago, had been born aboard ship in February 1877.⁵³

The foregoing may be an incorrect interpretation of events, since neither party to the argument commented further, but it seems to be in line with Forepaugh's singular preoccupation with protecting the reputation of his show. As for the infant elephant, Chicago was heavily advertised in the years that followed.

Forepaugh seemingly followed Coup's doctrine of 1871 in which he sought to visit only cities with a population of at least 5,000. The 1883 *Route Book*, diligently compiled by Charles Silbon, emphasized this trend, listing populations of the 146 cities visited, of which only 17 were smaller than 5,000. It is an apothegm in circus management that it's always profitable to visit new territory. People who have not been exposed to much entertainment will flock to shows willing to make an effort to reach them. Thus, Forepaugh experienced full houses in such places as Salt Lake, Reno, and Virginia City, where few circuses had been. Not only was it the novelty that proved to be popular, but also the honor bestowed on the local population by being chosen as one of the stops on the way westward.

In keeping with this idea of playing new territory, Forepaugh's 1878 route saw April and May in California and

Forepaugh's Trains

As car companies brought out longer stock cars and flat cars, Forepaugh's trains went through various combinations. Using newspaper reports, we list them here at intervals, mainly at the times of purchase:

- 1878: 30 cars, 40 feet long (*Sheboygan (WI) Times*, July 27).
- 1879: 30 cars, 40 feet long (*South Bend (IN) Tribune*, June 10).
- 1880: 39 cars, 40 feet long (*Forepaugh route book, 1880*).
- 1883: 66 cars, 40 feet long (*Forepaugh route book, 1883*).
- 1884: 62 cars, 40 feet long (*New York Clipper*, March 15. (July 5 *Clipper* reports 67 cars).
- 1885: 52 cars, 45 to 60 feet long (*Decatur (IL) Republican*, August 27).
- 1886: 45 cars, 60 feet long (*New York Clipper*, July 24).

Since railroads charged by the car, not by its length, circus owners gained loading space without extra cost by buying 60-foot cars as soon as they could afford them. The chart shows that forty-five 60-foot cars was the equal of sixty-seven 40-foot cars.

Nevada. But by June 17 the show was on the Lakefront in Chicago. On July 17, 1878, the *Baraboo Republic* reprinted a report from the *Chicago Times* giving the earliest description we have found of Forepaugh's train. Though he advertised thirty-four cars, the same quantity remembered in 1910 by Forepaugh's protégé Frank A. Robbins, the correct number seems to be thirty-one. One advertising car ran ahead of the show, while the show train included two palace sleeping cars for staff and performers, two sleepers for workingmen, ten stock cars, fifteen flatcars, and a special car to carry the tallest chariot. This last-named vehicle was specially constructed for overpass clearance.

Another aspect of the change from a wagon-drawn circus to one mounted on rails was the necessity of employing personnel familiar with the rituals of railroading. The

A Small Legal Incident

Though it was underplayed, we find some mischief involving Forepaugh, John O'Brien, and the Barnum show alluded to in the *New York Clipper* of January 19 and February 2, 1878. An argument among showmen was hardly front-page news, especially when one of them was as litigious as Forepaugh. As far as is known, when O'Brien and Barnum settled affairs at the conclusion of their partnership of 1874 and 1875 (O'Brien had managed Barnum's World's Fair), O'Brien was in debt to Barnum for \$14,000. Barnum's people succeeded in obtaining a judgment against O'Brien for this amount and levying on some O'Brien equipment in Frankford. As it turned out, the equipment belonged to Forepaugh, who quickly countersued, having previously warned Barnum that the chattel was not O'Brien's. How Forepaugh must have relished the chance to confound Barnum. What all this suggests is that Forepaugh had invested in O'Brien's circus in 1877. O'Brien's 1878 show, which went out under the Campbell's title, was also Forepaugh's property, as he sold it to others in 1879.

1878 route book lists a Master of Transportation, a car repainer, a watchman, a porter, and four trainmen, all positions peculiar to rail travel. These figures changed as the number of railcars increased. By 1883 there were six porters and thirty trainmen.

When the Aggregation left Chicago on June 23, 1878, it visited its traditional stomping ground in the Midwest—Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The last three weeks of the 1878 season were spent in Missouri. Business was slow until late August, when a five-day stand at Twelfth and Locust streets in St. Louis revived attendance. The winter was spent at the Exposition Building in Louisville.

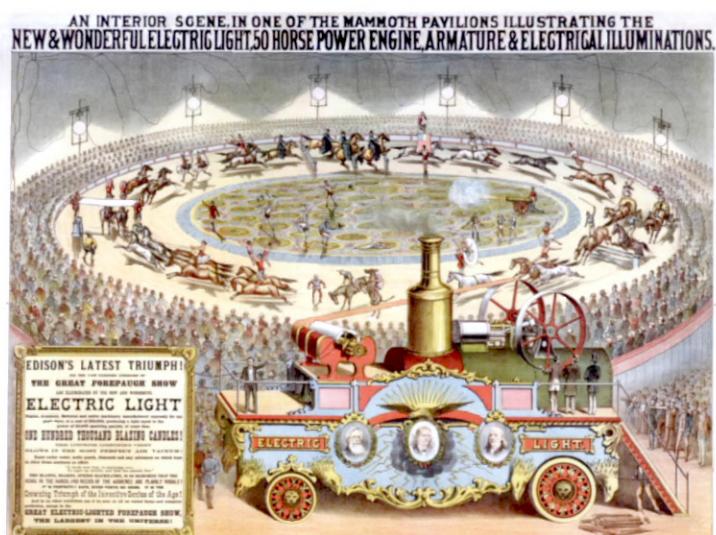
The consensus on the season, as supplied by the correspondents of the *New York Clipper*, mentioned the outbreak of yellow fever in the South, which caused some early closings. The largest companies were said to be the Great London and P. T. Barnum. The latter was especially profitable when Barnum himself appeared. Such was his fame that people flocked to his show just to say that they had seen him. Barnum's usual contribution was a ride around the track in his carriage; sometimes he gave a short speech.

Show business was generally pronounced to be a success for the first time since 1873.

Most of the technological changes in the nineteenth-century circus benefited management rather than the public. By this we mean the use of the tent, the horse-drawn wagon, and the railroad. Such advances did not affect the ring performance. However, in 1879, the advent of electric light to illuminate both the performance and the show grounds led to a greater sense of audience comfort and safety. Women were especially grateful for the lighted evenings. It had been customary for women and children to attend matinees, as did farmers, who needed to rise early. Audiences at nighttime performances were chiefly urban men.

The Great London Circus, formerly Howes' Great London, had been bought by James E. Cooper and James A. Bailey in 1878, and in 1879 became the first show to have electric lights. Bailey was two years away from becoming one of the Barnum partners, and his adoption of electric lighting was in line with his future prospects. He possessed the intellect, perspicacity and attention to detail that it took to dominate the American circus in its golden age. Bailey was a combination of showman and businessman, which made him a worthy opponent to Adam Forepaugh, with whom he shared these qualities.

The Great London Circus arranged with the Brush Electric Light Company of Cleveland to furnish open carbon arc lamps to illuminate its tents. There were



AS PRODUCED IN ADAM FOREPAUGH'S GREATEST OF ALL GREAT SHOWS. THE ELECTRIC LIGHT & THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS CREATED IS EXHIBITED AFTERNOONS AS WELL AS AT NIGHT.

Forepaugh was among the show owners who quickly added an electric light plant to his list of attractions in 1879.

RMA, Tibbals

two lights in the menagerie and four in the main tent. The system cost \$15,000 and was an exclusive franchise under canvas. It was the nexus of the show's advertising effort in 1879.

Forepaugh, moving east from Chicago, met the Great London, moving west from Cleveland, in June 1879. A spirited paper war ensued in such places as Toledo, Adrian, Jackson, Kalamazoo, and Grand Rapids. Forepaugh was made very aware of the popularity of his opponent's electric lights. He arranged for a demonstration when he reached Detroit on July 6 and ordered an eight-lamp set for \$7,000. According to the contract the lights were to be ready in six weeks, but there is no evidence they were installed before the 1880 season. W. W. Cole also introduced lights at this time.

Continuing his dominance of menagerie displays, in 1879 Forepaugh toured forty-two cages and twelve elephants, eleven of which appeared in the ring. The twelfth pachyderm, Chicago, the baby, was too young to perform and remained in the menagerie when the others presented their act. An observer in Buffalo wrote that when the adult elephants were taken to the arena, the baby raised such a fuss the writer assumed a lion had escaped.

Forepaugh's menagerie tent was a 100-foot round with six center poles, reported to be the largest tent ever raised in that city. The publicity department referred to its fifty-six cages as "A Noachian Menagerie," and lithographs were produced showing Forepaugh leading the animals two by two to the "Ark." In those times, of course, circus day was a major event. The advertising that preceded it was like an avalanche—newspaper ads, flamboyant lithographs on every vertical surface, and the handbills and couriers that were so freely distributed. Since the circus was the ultimate in popular culture, its promises were in the nature of revelation, and most of the population of a town determined to attend. Among such were factory workers who, to the dismay of employers, abandoned their shops for the day. It was not unusual for factory owners to publish warnings in advance of circus day in which they threatened dismissal for any employee who failed to come to work. Manufacturers were known to pressure city councils to deny circuses permission to play in their city. But it was all largely in vain. The circus was the ne plus ultra of amusement, and most found it difficult to resist. For one thing, there was no solemnity about it as there was on the Fourth of July or at Christmas. Everyday restrictions were easily thrown off, the mind-numbing six-day workweek forgotten for a few hours. It slowly became the practice in industrial



TOLEDO, Corner Franklin and Woodruff Avenues, THURSDAY, MAY 18th.

The size and quality of Forepaugh's traveling menagerie made a comparison to the Biblical Noah a perfect fit for advertising.

RMA, Tibbals

centers to close shop on circus day. Eventually, towns declared a school holiday when a circus appeared, and local merchants were ecstatic with the crowds that lined the streets from early morning until late afternoon.

This was the situation at the time the American circus came into full flower beginning in 1879: its golden age, dated as the period from 1880 to 1920, four decades when society wholeheartedly embraced the circus. It had no peer in the public mind. These seasons between the Panic of 1873 and the rise in popularity of motion pictures saw a great rivalry in which showmen stretched the bounds of acquisition far beyond what had been. The public was treated to better performers, more animals, and more sensational sights than ever before. There seemed no limit to the showmen's inventiveness. The words with which they trumpeted their offerings—Great! Greater! Greatest of All!—came to be accepted not as empty boasts but as truth.

Part VI Some Forepaugh Advertising



Advertising posted for Forepaugh's Aggregation in 1869.

CWM

From the time he and John O'Brien bought the Mabie menagerie in 1865, Forepaugh's advertising emphasized his zoological offerings. Though the posters and advertisements proclaimed a full roster of circus acts, the acts were definitely subordinated to the zoological wonders. In this, Forepaugh deviated from standard circus advertising, which emphasized headline performers in the arena.

When, in 1866, Forepaugh and O'Brien first added performers to their show, the newspaper ads bunched the performers' names in a single paragraph, while most of the space was devoted to the menagerie. Forepaugh continued this practice in 1867 when he put his own name on the circus. "Twenty-four massive dens and 160 stalwart draught horses for transportation," were announced in Rochester, New York, where Forepaugh faced opposition from two other circuses. In Syracuse, the cage occupants were presented at length, but again, only a paragraph was given to the human roster. Professor Langworthy, the lion trainer, always came in for notice, but the others—the riders and acrobats and clowns—were almost an afterthought.

The thinking behind this advertising must have been that, since arena acts were fairly cut and dried, and all circuses had them, it was best to emphasize the birds and beasts that other companies lacked. This same effort is seen

in the advertising for Yankee Robinson's circus, and George F. Bailey's Quadruple Combination (which boasted the first hippopotamus on any circus).

Forepaugh introduced the separate menagerie tent in 1869 and had the only two-tent exhibition in America that season. In newspaper columns the huge bull elephant Romeo and Little Annie, an elephant calf, were mentioned more often than such human luminaries as Tom King or the Stokes Family. By 1870 the circus toured thirty cages of animals and three elephants, the largest menagerie of any show then traveling.

In 1871 the P. T. Barnum circus emerged as the largest in the land, and Forepaugh's 1872 advertising was overhauled to meet this new challenge. No longer satisfied reciting the merits of the Aggregation, Forepaugh's writers began piling on numbers, most obviously fictitious. They wrote of a thousand men and horses, ten thousand museum curiosities, fifteen hundred wild animals. Such embellishment was muted when there was no opposition in sight. The following superfluities are extracted from ads in Galesburg, Illinois, when the Barnum show was but eighteen days away:

"Moving by rail from Baltimore to Pittsburgh required 129 freight cars and six passenger coaches." That was exactly twice the actual number used. It was further stated that the

show was so large it had been “compelled to Abandon Railroads Forever (to become) a City Moving Overland.”

Barnum’s advertising, on the other hand, emphasized such ethnological marvels as the Fiji Cannibals and the Museum of Historical Curiosities, as well as unusual humans such as midgets and giants and bearded women. The Barnum show called itself a “Traveling World’s Fair,” not a circus, though Dan Castello’s circus was mentioned as an appendage.

Forepaugh touted Chang and Eng, the famous Siamese twins, and a two-headed baby (in formaldehyde). Since he had no giraffe (as did Barnum), nor a rhinoceros (as did Barnum), he put forward a tapir, which he called a “hippopotamus (S. A.),” meaning from South America.

In the next season, 1873, Forepaugh again went west—to Michigan, Indiana and Ohio, while Barnum opted for New England, so there was no opposition between them. The focus of Forepaugh’s advertising was his circus’s five-tent arrangement (two menageries, two museums, and the arena), as well as the addition of a rhinoceros, Forepaugh’s first.

The progression in animal procurement followed a pattern that most shows adhered to over the years. In this, the more common and easily cared-for types—the big cats, and camels, and oxen—were usually the basis for a menagerie. As new species were captured and offered by dealers, they were advertised as new wonders. An example was the wildebeest, or gnu. Various antelope species enjoyed brief acclaim, as did exotic birds. But the giraffe, the rhinoceros, and the hippopotamus were considered the epitome of an expensive outlay. These animals were always extensively advertised, not alone for their cost but for the necessity of nurturing them and accommodating them in unique housing. Giraffes, for instance, were notoriously fragile and seldom survived long in the day-to-day jolting that circus display required. It would be 1879 before Forepaugh could boast of having the three species on his show at the same time.

By 1874, Forepaugh was advertising a rhinoceros and a giraffe as well as three elephants. Since Barnum was announcing that his Hippodrome was not a circus, and it had no menagerie, the difference between them was clear; this difference continued into 1875, when Barnum’s Hippodrome ventured into the West as far as Omaha, Nebraska, while Forepaugh spent much of the season in Canada.

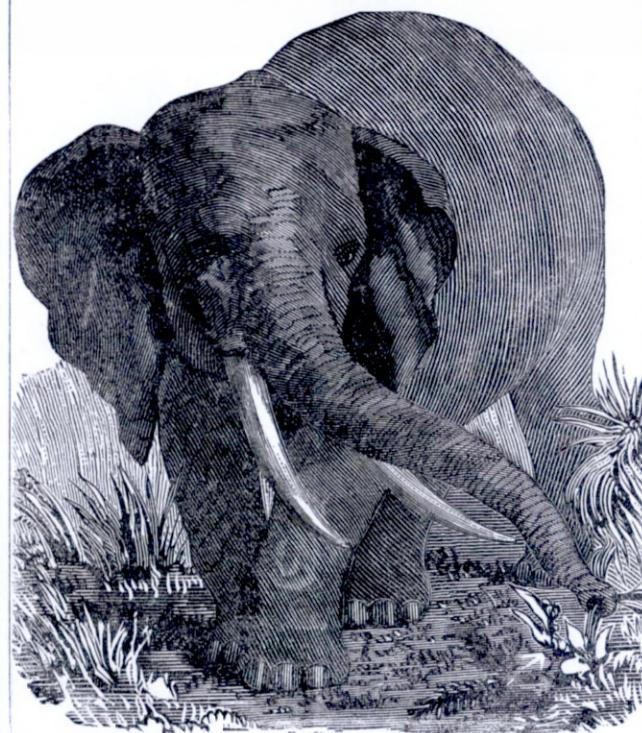
With the 1876 advent of the Flatfoot management team on the Barnum circus, the show returned to a conventional circus format, and the annual rivalry between the various shows reverted to the intensity of 1873. By this time, the larger outfits were all advertising similar animal features. Four had giraffes, three had rhinoceroses, three had sea lions, and two had hippopotamuses. Then elephants came to the fore, a preview of the “elephant wars” of the 1880s.

THE OLD WAR ELEPHANT “ROMEO,”

WEIGHING MORE THAN FIVE TONS.

The Largest and Best Performing Elephant

IN AMERICA!



Peaceful beneath primeval trees, that cast
Their ample shade o'er Niger's yellow stream,
And where the Ganges rolls his sacred wave;
Or 'mid the central depth of blackening woods.

High raised in solemn theatre around,
Leans the huge Elephant, wisest of brutes!
Oh, truly wise! with gentle might endowed,
Though powerful, not destructive.

The War Elephant, Romeo was one of the best advertised features of the Forepaugh show in the 1870s. RMA, Tibbals

Howes’ Great London carried ten (of which five performed in the ring), Cooper & Bailey had seven, Forepaugh had six, and Van Amburgh & Co. owned five.

The lessening of differences between companies created the need for increased publicity, with ever larger newspaper ads and the posting of more and more lithographs. Newspaper ads cost more where population was high, so we find the ad volume in smaller cities as much as ten times larger than in high-circulation metropolitan areas.

Once the Forepaugh show had joined the fraternity of railroad-mounted circuses in 1877, the advertising department headed its offerings with “Coming With Three Great Railroad Trains!” and “Drawn by Three Thirty-Ton Engines!” In addition, in that season of 1877, the show acquired its first hippopotamus, an eight-month-old male, added to the menagerie in August, when the circus was in Ohio. The hippo calf went to California and back, but must



The animals of Forepaugh's menagerie were prominent features of the advertising for the 1874 Aggregation. RMA, Tibbals

have died in 1879, as another replaced it in winter quarters in Louisville.

In 1879, Frank A. Robbins sold popcorn at the entrance to Forepaugh's menagerie tent, which stretched behind him almost as far as the eye could see. When visitors asked, "Where are the seats?" his standard reply was, "Go straight ahead three-quarters of a mile and turn left." That sort of bombastic utterance fit well with the efforts of the new writers for the Forepaugh forces, W. W. Durand (1837–1886) and C. H. Day (1842–1907). With the ascendancy of these two word wizards the show's public pronouncements underwent a definite change, much of it as ridiculous as "... and Adam gave names to every beast of the field." We can believe such reckless boasting pleased Forepaugh. It was a clever mixture of the biblical and the personal.

The Forepaugh circus went into New England in 1879 for the first time in twelve years. This was Barnum territory, and had been for seven seasons. Forepaugh prospered in it. Every circus in the country prospered in 1879. Not one lost money, according to the *New York Clipper*, which further announced among circus owners a growing desire to "out-elephant" one another. The rapidly increasing number of elephants involved

in this competition would have invited trouble if the circuses traveled by horse and wagon, but carrying them by rail made it safer and easier, so that by 1941 Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey would move forty-seven elephants daily.

The attempt by larger circuses to "out-elephant" one another was slow to develop. Though the attractiveness of the great beasts had long been recognized, their cost was a deterrent. Acquiring one elephant sufficed for most shows, its presence being a boon to publicity. The first elephant had landed in America in 1796, and early menageries (as opposed to circuses) often featured a single animal that was led from town to town and exhibited in barns for twenty-five cents. It wasn't until 1831 that two elephants were displayed together in a menagerie. In 1843 James Raymond, the leading menagerie owner of the time, introduced a four-elephant hitch on his bandwagon. In 1851, long before he owned his famous circus, Barnum joined with Seth B. Howes to import ten elephants from Ceylon, eight of which survived shipping. This was the largest group of elephants imported to that time.

Forepaugh had first acquired two elephants, Romeo and Kate Rice (also called Juliet), in the 1865 Mabie Me-

nagerie purchase. When Forepaugh and his partner John O'Brien parted in 1866, Forepaugh took Romeo, which he owned until the animal's death in Chicago on June 7, 1872, following an operation on his front legs to remove infected material.

Forepaugh had one of the country's leading elephant trainers in his family. Adam Jr. began appearing in the ring with his father's elephants in 1875, replacing his uncle, George Forepaugh, at the task. Abetted by a friendly elephant man known as "Big Babe," young Adam had learned the craft in secret, unbeknownst to his father (whom he always addressed as "Pop"). When Babe asked Adam Sr. for a raise, he found himself out of a job, and Adam Jr., to whom his father could deny little, asked to fill the vacancy. Though he was but fourteen at the time, "Addie" proved to be a very competent presenter of the six animals then in the herd. His act ended with the six elephants forming a pyramid on tubs. This was very popular, and almost every review praised it. Addie may be the reason his father kept acquiring elephants until there were thirty-one. Eventually, the show presented two rings' worth.

Elephants figured in what was quite possibly the largest advertising sham of the era, in 1884. Known as the White Elephant War, it was perpetrated by both Forepaugh and the Barnum show. It was a war of words surrounding the exhibition of "sacred" white elephants, which each show claimed to have. Many feel the conflicting claims were a discredit

to both organizations and may have hastened the public's disenchantment with circus advertising. It was the first instance we have found in which the press derided both sides of a controversy.

Although show claims had been subject to exaggeration since the 1850s, up to this time claims were still accepted as truth by much of the public. Advertising in general was not provable on its face. Newspapers and outdoor walls blossomed with promises from patent medicines, grooming aids, horse liniments, and agricultural tools. The circus writers simply followed the common practice of the day.

In July 1879, Forepaugh and Barnum engaged in an advertising battle in upper New York State. They were three days apart in playing Syracuse, and a week apart in Rochester. The Forepaugh writers waded in, claiming their show was "A rival-crusher, and triton among the minnows. No balloon sensations or deceptive dodges, but all solid, solid, solid merit." The writers changed their tune in 1880, when Forepaugh added a daily balloon ascension as a prelude to the matinee.

The most outstanding advertising opportunity of 1880 was a gift to the Great London circus (owned by James A. Bailey and James E. Cooper) when, on March 10, one of its elephants was delivered of a calf, proclaimed (incorrectly) as the first such infant to be born in America. "Oh, that precious baby elephant!" trumpeted the ads, and it proved to be the greatest of novelties. The show was assured of full houses that season.

Also in 1880, the Great London and Forepaugh opened the season by combining shows for a two-week stand in Philadelphia. It was advertised as "the greatest array of talent hitherto seen," laying the groundwork for later cooperative actions by Bailey and Forepaugh, two showmen who approached their work with equal intensity.

On November 5 that same year, Barnum & London held a great auction of surplus property, brought about by the combination of the two large circuses. Forepaugh was one of the buyers at the sale, a fact gleefully noted by the Barnum & London advertising department. Their ads said Forepaugh had purchased "the stuffed monkeys; old stuffed snakes; the old, blind horses; the worn-out harness; the dilapidated cages; the old, rotten canvas; and the old, worn-out wagons." Obviously, they chortled, this exposed Forepaugh as a fraud and a swindler. Such verbiage was usually ignored in the circus business, and accepted in the back and forth of claims to superiority. But in this case Forepaugh felt aggrieved and instituted a civil suit in the Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia asking for \$50,000 in damages.⁵⁴ This began a three-year battle in which the personalities of the owners played as great a part in the advertising as did the wonders under canvas.

Forepaugh's suit came to nothing. By June 11, a news-

Forepaugh's Elephants over the Years

The increasing number of Forepaugh's pachyderms charts like this:

- 1866: one
- 1867: two (three in late season)
- 1868: two
- 1869–1871: three
- 1872: three (until death of Romeo)
- 1873: one
- 1874: three
- 1875–1878: six
- 1879: twelve
- 1880: fifteen
- 1881: twenty
- 1882: twenty-two
- 1882–1886: twenty-five
- 1887: thirty-one

ADAM FOREPAUGH'S GREAT SHOW, LARGEST IN THE WORLD.



MUSEUM. MENAGERIE, TRIPLE CIRCUS & ROMAN HIPPODROME.

"Addie" Forepaugh was a very talented boy, and one whom every commentator has granted unusual ability, both as a performer and administrator. Adam Jr. appears on the roster in 1867, at age six, which can probably be put down to nothing so much as paternal pride. But the boy appeared in the ring riding a pony at the age of eight.

RMA, Tibbals

paper reported that "the difficulties between Forepaugh and Barnum have been amicably adjusted."⁵⁵ However, the Forepaugh writers had to get in that they were "glad to get an official acknowledgement that Barnum's attractions were stuffed monkeys and worthless animals."

It should be remembered that arena acts were not overlooked entirely. Though Forepaugh always advanced his zoological properties first and foremost, he also had to adjust his publicity to the practices of his competitors. This was to put forward the essence of the circus—the acts in the arena. These had been established long before Forepaugh appeared on the scene, and were what the public expected in terms of circus entertainment. Menageries made fine additions to a show, but were not prerequisites. Proof of this lies in the fact that many circuses lacked menageries. One pioneer manager, Lewis B. Lent, had "the heartiest contempt" for what

he called "cat shows." He resisted adding menageries to his large circuses until the 1870s. His conservative beliefs extended to other facets of the business, such as proclaiming that "one ring was best," and that street parades were unnecessary. In 1880—the dawn of the golden age of circuses—only fifteen of the thirty-six shows on tour in America included a menagerie. Of course, as few as two cages could constitute a menagerie.

To Forepaugh, a man who had bought and sold horses and cattle for many years, the value of animals was part of his stock in trade. If he paid \$200 for a horse, he always regarded it as a \$200 horse. This same line of thinking predominated when he acquired a menagerie of exotic animals, although the prices dealers asked were generally known, much like the stock market or meat dealers' prices. When Forepaugh paid \$800 for a lion, that was its value to him. Adding up the cost of his investment in animals produced a

defined figure, and one he could comprehend. But when it came to evaluating performers and their salaries, he was at the mercy of the market. He had to pay what the competition paid—more if he wanted first-class talent. There was no way he could determine if a \$100-a-week rider was worth that salary. He left it to others to determine who should be hired. He had veto power, of course, but his long-time managers, such as William Monroe and Jack Forepaugh, were capable men who served “the Governor” well.

Forepaugh was willing to pay for top talent, which was fortunately abundant. Hiring practice at the time was dependent on performers offering their services, usually by mail. “Name your lowest offer” was the message in hiring ads. On average, a performer could expect to serve two seasons, and then move on. There were a few superstars who commanded top salaries and changed shows as often as every season, lured by higher and higher emoluments. It was unusual for a leading performer like Dan Rice to spend three seasons with one show as he did with Forepaugh. Rice’s \$1,000 weekly salary probably cemented him there until his political antics earned him Forepaugh’s ire.

More typically, performers might begin on Forepaugh, move to Barnum, then to W. W. Cole, then to Sells Bros. and so on. As they aged, and lost a step or two, their path inclined toward smaller circuses. It was not unusual for declining riders to turn to clowning.

As owner of one of the larger menageries, Forepaugh had an investment that was well worth advertising, and his agents spent a lot of money to do just that. In contrast, performers, who regularly changed shows, represented a much smaller investment and received less lavish promotion. Dan Rice was a featured performer whose name also titled the circus. When Rice left Forepaugh’s employment after 1868, the spotlight fell on J. M. Langworthy, the lion trainer, and Stewart Craven, the elephant man. William P. Williams replaced Craven in 1867, and in the next season it was the Stokes Family of riders, and Tom King, the leaper. The five-member Madigan family of riders was on the posters in 1869, as was George Forepaugh, Adam’s brother, who was by then in charge of the elephants. Tom King and the Stokes troupe returned in 1870, when, for the first time, Adam Forepaugh, Jr., called “Addie,” was granted recognition. “Addie” was nine years old.

For the most part, performers’ names were not broadcast heavily, and the weight of the advertising message remained with the four-legged attractions. There is more publicity for Forepaugh’s featured performers in the newspaper reviews than in the show’s advertising. These reviews are the best source for descriptions of the various acts. Even after the Barnum show emerged as a major competitor in 1871, Forepaugh’s advertising continued to favor his menagerie, a wise move since his and Van Amburgh & Co.’s collections

were the largest on the road.

Nevertheless, Forepaugh and Barnum were in heated competition, and the more Forepaugh and the Barnum interests spent on acquiring talent, the higher their advertising budgets became. In the wagon show days Forepaugh spent roughly 8 percent on print advertising; by 1880, 25 to 30 percent of expenses went to lithographs and newspaper ads. One reason for this was the reduction in the cost of four-color printing from as much as fifty cents per poster to as little as four cents, allowing a commensurate explosion in purchasing. The change reflected the move from job press printing to stone lithography.

The Price of Circus Advertising

Fred Lawrence (1838–1895), press agent of the Forepaugh show, was interviewed for the August 2, 1880 edition of the *Cleveland Leader*. He volunteered examples of the cost of advertising in just that one city (a two-day stand):

5,000 sheets of pictorial paper:	\$300
3,000 lithographs:	\$200
140,000 programs:	\$400
Cost of billboards:	\$350
Wages of billposters and cost of rented teams:	\$260
Newspaper advertisements:	\$1,200
Lawrence said the total for Cleveland was	\$3,030

All the larger circuses mentioned specific performers; the small ones used “stock paper,” which was printed with idealized circus scenes and mentioned no names. Beginning in 1880, the so-called “thrill acts” came into prominence. These were daredevil deeds, over and above the riding, acrobatic, and strength acts that had for so long defined the circus. Forepaugh presented Ella Zuila, who rode a bicycle on a tight wire sixty feet in the air. George Loyal was shot from a cannon (a form of rubber slingshot) to be caught by the same Zuila, hanging head down from a trapeze. A troupe of bicycle-mounted jugglers (Selbini and Villione) graced the 1881 program. And, though not a thrill act, the Lalla Rookh pageant was, in one form or another, an element of Forepaugh advertising for years after 1881. These special acts required iconographic explanation. Since the audience was familiar with the traditional acts, a simple mention in news-



LOYAL & ZUILA.



The illustrations on this page represent the astounding performances of Mlle

ELLA ZUILA, THE FEMALE BLONDIN

Now with the Great Forepaugh Show, The Most Extraordinary Spectacle of the Age! Only to be seen in the Great Forepaugh

**CROSSING 3-4 INCH WIRE 100 FEET FROM THE GROUND
HER FEET AND BODY ENCASED IN SACKS,**

Reaching to her arms, using no balance-pole or counter-weights. The height of human audacity, and the climax of recklessness is witnessed when she actually

Walks Blindfolded Across a 3-4 Inch Wire

High in mid-air, using nothing to aid in her perilous journey, trusting only to Providence, her own skill, and the aerial thread that sustains her in space. She also

**WALKS UPON STILTS
OVER THE SAME SLENDER ROADWAY.**

With the like ease that one would traverse the solid earth. The consummate skill, the cool, determined, Spartanic bravery of this young, graceful, modest *petite Parisienne*, surpasses that of her once famous country-women, *Madame Sacquie de La Magde*, who was renown a generation ago on the tight rope, or the more recent achievements of the world-famed *Bimella*. Zuila also executes

CWM

Strong woman, Ella Zuila, and her human cannonball husband, George Loyal, were stars of Forepaugh's shows throughout the 1870s.

paper ads was sufficient. But shooting a man from a cannon could only be explained by some kind of pictorial.

Forepaugh's audience was largely rural and appreciative of seeing animals, performing or otherwise. Not surprisingly, Addie Forepaugh was the show's longest-running performer. He first presented an elephant act in 1875 with two grown animals and two calves. The public response to this fourteen-year-old putting gigantic beasts through their paces was immediate and lasting. For the next fifteen years Addie's elephants were headliners in his father's programs. He increased the herd until by 1880 he worked twenty animals in three rings. For the 1883 season, Forepaugh's elephant herd swelled to twenty-five, of which Addie's act used fifteen.

Adam Jr. trained horses as well, and the Forepaugh program featured Addie's twenty-two-horse liberty act. (Leo Van Weste assumed responsibility for this act in 1882.) Leonati's descent by bicycle down a spiral ramp just 12 inches wide was another thrill act. But the star of the 1882 Forepaugh program proved to be Louise Rentz, a ménage rider from a well-known German circus family, who presented an outstanding exhibition of controlled riding. Often, people came to see her act and then went home, ignoring the remainder of the program. Despite her popularity, Rentz, like so many

European performers, spent but a single season touring with an American circus before returning to her homeland. The everyday movement of an American show often proved anathematic to European riders. In Europe circuses played indoors for a whole season, and on level, smooth surfaces. In America, by contrast, they had to perform on a different surface every day. We know of one French riding troupe that canceled their American contract because they felt they couldn't perform their best when one day they were faced with a sandy field and the next with a near-swamp. In addition to working under sub-par conditions, circus food was low-quality, usually salt pork and boiled potatoes.

The Roman Hippodrome Races, which closed the performance, were new and popular features over the ensuing three years. These contests were run by various mounts—chariots, ostriches, elephants—with both human and simian jockeys. Another imported act in 1883 and 1884 involved thirty Arabian gymnasts. These types of acts naturally lent themselves to the colorful lithographs of the late century.

But then in stormed Cody & Carver's Wild West. The duo—Colonel William F. Cody and Dr. William F. Carver—split at the end of that first (1883) season, Carver for some reason bearing a strong grudge thereafter. Buffalo Bill's Wild West followed the next year and circus managers

were quick to acknowledge its appeal. The Barnum & London show added a troupe of American Indians, and Forepaugh brought out what he called A Wild West Border Show. He also changed his show's title to Adam Forepaugh and the Wild West, which it remained through 1890. He added cowboy and Indian spectacles, such as an Indian attack on a covered wagon train, and a reenactment of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. An unfortunate by-product of all the discharge of weapons was that the tent was filled with gun-smoke for some time after the battles.

All these changes from the programs of the first ninety years indicate the circus was becoming a repository for acts outside the accepted circus canon. It was as if they had no other venue in which to display themselves.

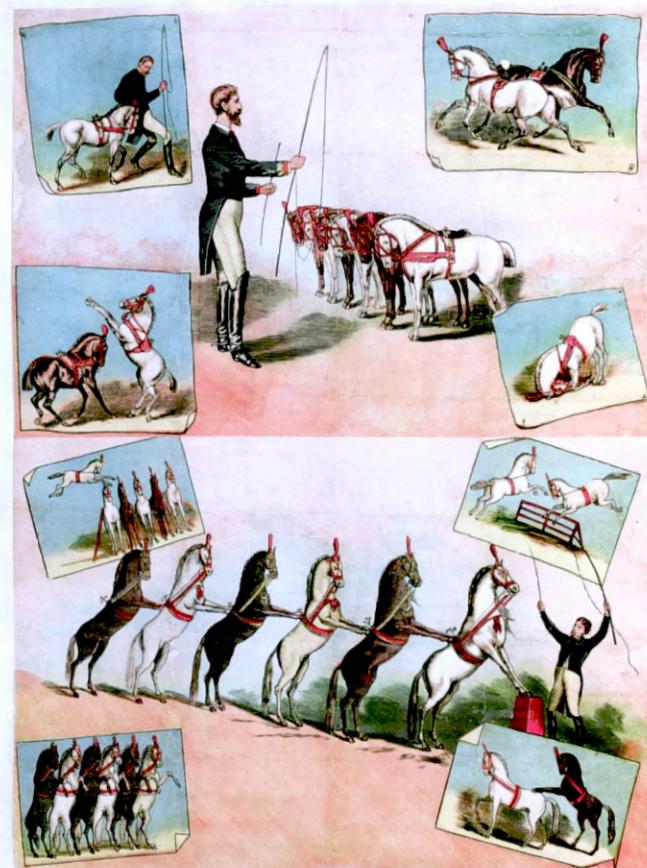
The craze for bicycling was reflected in Forepaugh's hiring the Elliot family, six unicycle and bicycle riders. He signed sharpshooter A. H. Bogardus and his marksmanship act, and later a similar act by W. F. Carver. Forepaugh arranged permission to bring fifty Indians from the Pine Ridge Reservation, not only for their use in western-themed dramas, but for their exotic presence in street parades.

The circus as an institution had always been composed of disparate acts, each with its own beginning, middle, and finale, and unconnected one to another. Because of this separation, it was not difficult to insert any attraction in the program. Animal acts were relatively inexpensive because, once purchased and advertised, the creatures only needed to be fed. But human beings, performing such seemingly impossible feats as leaping, hurdling, standing on the backs of hurtling steeds, and shooting from the mouths of cannons, were the essence of excitement and the reason the public filled the tents.

For fifty cents, the ticket holder could witness all that he had been studying in the flaming pictorials pasted on the village walls. When promises were not kept, the newspapers were quick to point them out, but by then the show had gone. Circuses large and small often advertised features that they lacked. The blandishments in the handbills were sometimes not in evidence in the show. Here is one review of such a situation: "In the first place, the beautiful horse, one Black Hawk, which had been trained to walk a single plank three hundred feet long to the top of the fifth center-pole, didn't walk the plank very extensively. In fact, he didn't walk the plank at all, for two very good reasons, viz; there was no plank to walk upon, and there was in all probability no horse to perform the difficult feat, which about a thousand people stood in the mud to observe."⁵⁶

Days, sometimes months ahead of the circus proper, billposters went out in hired buggies to plaster lithographs on any vacant walls they were able to rent. The appearance of the colorful illustrations instantly focused public attention on the coming show. Townspeople gathered before the

LEO VON WESTE'S TRAINED HORSES AND PONIES



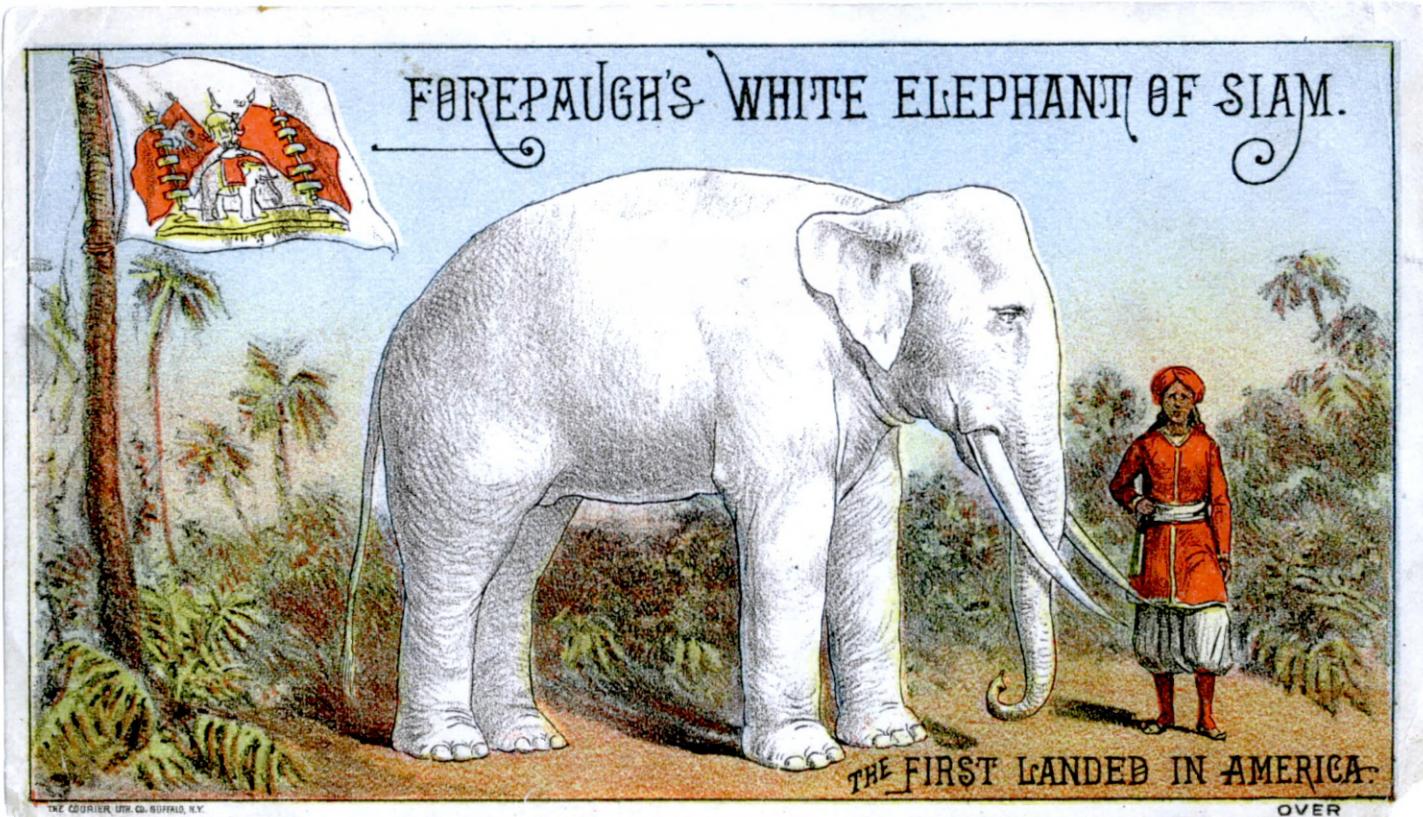
BE SEEN ONLY IN THE GREAT FOREPAUGH SHOW LARGEST IN THE WORLD.

JAMES REILLY, ENGRAVER AND DECORATIVE STEAM JOB PRINTER, 12, 14 & 16 SPRUCE ST., N.Y.

Leo Von Weste took over the presentation of horse acts in 1882. RMA, Tibbals

posters and gaped and talked. The galloping horses, snarling lions, and women in knee-length skirts fascinated country folk and made them resolve to attend the show.

In smaller towns, the pictorials would go up ten days in advance of the show dates; in cities they might be hung three months in advance. In the biggest cities, large billboards might announce the show six months hence. Even those who thought the circus sinful (Forepaugh's "church people") were well aware a circus would soon be in their



The epic battle of the white elephants was, in Forepaugh's mind, the root of public distrust of show advertising. Trade card, circa 1883.

RMA, Tibbals

midst. "Bill it like a circus," became an advertiser's by-word.

In December 1883, Barnum & London announced that their agent, W. B. Gaylord, telegraphed from Mandalay that he had procured a white elephant, an elephant revered in Burma as sacred or holy. It was the custom there for all light-skinned (i.e., "white") elephants to become the property of the king. They were specially stabled, fed the choicest forage, and guarded by a host of attendants. A sacred elephant was extremely expensive to maintain and could not be disposed of, so if the king wanted to discipline one of his subjects, he had but to present him with one of the white elephants. The cost of keeping the beast would often bankrupt the recipient. From this comes the definition of a white elephant as an unwelcome or worthless gift.

Forepaugh could not let such a wonder escape him, and he announced on January 5, 1884, that he, too, had bought a white elephant and was having it shipped to Philadelphia. Thus began a rash of claims and counterclaims in which each circus insisted theirs was the genuine article. The opponent's, of course, was a fake. Amid cries of fraud from both sides, the arguments lasted through the early part of the season.

Barnum's animal was named Toung Taloung. He was fifteen years old; 7 feet, 6 inches tall; and weighed 6,400

pounds. He was not snow white. Albinism in elephants manifests as a light ashen color, with pink splashes.⁵⁷ This one had pink on his trunk and his chest. He was lodged at the London Zoo, from where he was shipped to New York amid a cascade of press releases.

Forepaugh's "white elephant" landed in New York on March 20.⁵⁸ Given the name Light of Asia, he was 4 feet, 8 inches tall, not quite five years old, and described as "the color of the ash on a good cigar."⁵⁹

Barnum issued a statement saying that all sacred white elephants but his were imposters. In the shouting between the two sides, Barnum's statement was discounted as just more "humbug."⁶⁰

As it played out, Forepaugh's agent, Sam Watson, had purchased a small Indian elephant named Tiny from Samuel Cross, the Liverpool animal dealer, and had him artificially colored with Paris white, a shade achieved by mixing a pigment with either lead or powdered chalk. It was said Forepaugh hired two men to paint the animal fifty times before shipping him to America. This treatment caused blisters and sore spots on the animal's skin. The paint had to be removed and a salve applied. Henry Cross, brother of the dealer, was quoted as saying they then sandpapered the beast with pumice stone to lighten the outer layer.⁶¹

Forepaugh exhibited Light of Asia in a black tent inside the menagerie. Netting prevented the public from getting closer than eight feet.

Much of the press coverage had a tongue-in-cheek attitude. The *New York Clipper* ran several poems about white elephants, including one about a drunk standing at the end of a pier in Manhattan who, when asked what he was doing, replied that he was waiting for another white elephant to appear. The same newspaper reported a western showman claiming to have a coal-black sacred elephant.

The question as to which, or either, elephant was white played into the hands of the show writers, especially those working for Barnum & London. Since the Forepaugh show played Philadelphia first, from April 14–24, 1884, Barnum had to resort to "Wait" ads. These were common then, and are sometimes seen today. "Wait for the Big Show," they read, hoping that the public would do so. "The only Sacred White Elephant [to] set foot in a Christian land," was Barnum's theme. Forepaugh responded with "the first and only white elephant to be exhibited in Philadelphia this season." Barnum offered to donate \$10,000 to charity if Forepaugh's animal proved to be genuine. So it went, back and forth.

On April 17 the Barnum & London publicity people announced that their opening day parade in Philadelphia, April 21, would feature "a painted, stained, and discolored elephant exactly in imitation of Forepaugh's." Forepaugh countered with "too white for Barnum."

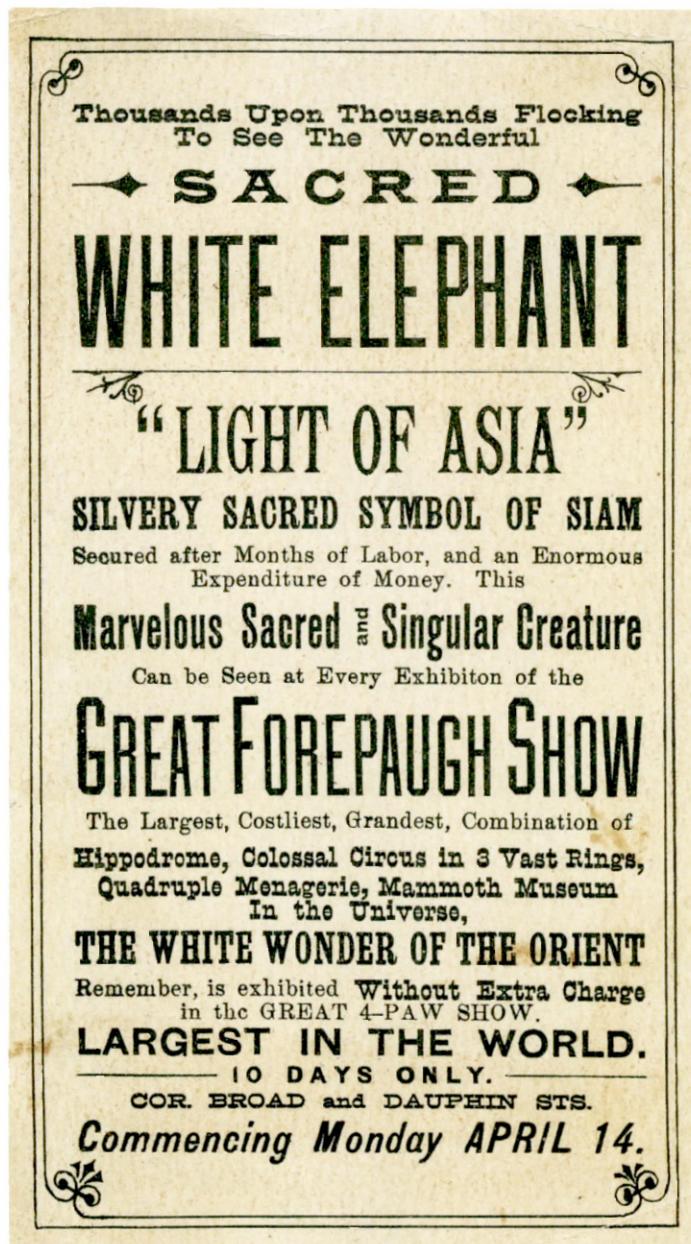
Even the *New York Times* couldn't resist the temptation to tease the showmen about the "sacredness" of the animals: "Mr. Barnum's elephant is claimed to be a thoroughly divine beast, and as evidence thereof, it is daily and publicly worshipped by alleged Siamese priests, who are hired at a liberal salary to illustrate the Siamese system of elephant worship. . . . Unlike Mr. Barnum, Mr. Forepaugh has never made a special point of appealing to the religious public."

The contentiousness was mainly manifested in the early season big city dates where Barnum and Forepaugh played closely on each other's heels—in Philadelphia, and several towns in New Jersey. Barnum & London then went into New England, while Forepaugh went to Buffalo and the western states. The white elephants were heralded much less as the circuses drew apart.

Forepaugh got rid of his animal by announcing its death. In actuality, the handlers simply stopped the pumice sanding, which allowed its natural color to return.

Barnum's Toung Taloung perished in an 1887 fire at the Bridgeport winter quarters. The *New York Dramatic News*, quoting "a Philadelphia circus proprietor" (obviously Forepaugh), printed his remarks as "Dem Barnum folks always gets out some sensation in de spring of de year."

As with most such allegations, nothing was proven. But before Forepaugh left for New Jersey, his advertising hinted



Back of a trade card, circa 1883, featuring the white elephant.
RMA, Tibbals

something had been settled: "Jealous rivals silenced. All slanders refuted. Every lie laid bare."

The cost to each of the participants in the white elephant controversy was estimated at \$30,000 above what ordinary advertising would have been. Uncharacteristically, Forepaugh was said to particularly regret the business because it created distrust in the public mind as to the truth in circus advertising.

Three years later the *New York Times* wrote of Barnum and Forepaugh: "Once in a while, they blunder exactly alike. The 'white elephant,' the cause of the 1884 war, is a case in point. The 'sacred brute' helped neither show, and it hurt the scientists who ventured to vouch for its integrity."

Part VII

Grangers and Strangers, Beware

Many an American memoir of “the good old days” describes a child rushing in the door and exclaiming something like, “Quick, mom, bring in the laundry. The show’s in town!” It was a warning that thieves might strip the clothesline while householders were at the circus. It happened often enough to be reported in the newspapers.

Break-ins, armed robberies, and picked pockets were not uncommon on show day. Every public event, of course, drew the light-fingered and heavy-handed: voting, graduations, musters and political meetings. But these were over in a day or so. Circus grounds were targeted because the circus was in business somewhere every day, all summer.

“Bar your doors! See to your latch pins!” newspapers warned on show day. Admonitions about gambling were frequent: “Never play another man’s game.” Yet the bustle and confusion and noise of a circus lot acted upon most country people like adrenaline. The usual quiet of a town was split asunder. A giddy freedom was loosed among what were ordinarily a homogeneous and orderly people.

Alcohol consumption, already high at eight ounces per capita per day, increased at public gatherings. Local toughs and circus toughs grated on each other’s psyches,

leading to arguments and fights. And the fuel for these “dust-ups” was often the actions of the circus employees or their hangers-on.

The con men, or “camp followers,” either worked for or trailed in the wake of circuses and always found a ready supply of “rubes” or “towners” on which to prey. As in all gambling, the greed of the “marks” was used against them. Three card monte, dice throwing, and thimble rigging all could be played without cheating. But there was more profit for the con man if he did cheat.⁶² Extracting money from the public was not difficult if there was no chance of losing. Simply demanding instant decisions from the slow-thinking could often accomplish the purpose.

Arguments arose as to what had happened or what was said or promised. The con men did not welcome interruptions; these interfered with the ongoing game, whatever it was. The locals suspected fraud, especially when the action was furious and difficult to follow. Each side brought their prejudices to the games. The gamblers looked at the grangers as fools. The townsmen assumed the games were crooked. Evidence of this was the verbiage used by the contrasting sides. The show people thought of the villagers as “gillies”



Forepaugh's elephants on parade, circa 1889.

RMA, Tibbals

or “rubes” while the country folk responded with “fakirs,” “thieves,” and “ruffians.”

Because circus managers were usually from the North, there was a great deal of North-South prejudice applied to the circus following the Civil War. To southerners of a particular bent, show people were “Yankees” and considered fair game when arguments arose. Added to such prejudices were the almost natural strains anent the village culture vs. the cosmopolitan life of the widely traveled circus people. In any confrontation, if the local had friends at hand, and the gambler had cohorts, a riot might be in the offing. There was no shortage of handguns or of men willing to use them.

Even without gambling as a catalyst, situations leading to rioting were common; we read of attacks on circuses because of one dissatisfaction or another. In one case, the concert or after-show was considered less than promised and wagons were attacked and thrown in the Mississippi River. It wasn’t unusual for locals to demand entrance to the circus without paying, using a pistol for a ticket. Drunken locals would attack circus employees just because they were strangers.

Sociologists refer to much of this behavior as “recreational rioting,” that is, civil commotion with no basis in political differences or racial prejudices. Small shows with limited manpower were constant targets. Larger shows, carrying a hundred to two hundred employees, were less likely to be attacked. By 1868, Forepaugh advertised 150 men—enough muscle to give rowdy customers pause. It was no help, however, during an 1883 stand in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, when a mob attacked the show after a towner caught cutting the canvas was beaten by circus employees. During the evening performance, when a crowd formed and advanced on the tents, the show people, who had been warned, were ready for trouble. Forepaugh had provided his employees with pistols and they met force with force. The five thousand people in the audience rushed for the exits. There was a great deal of gunfire from both sides. When it was over five men lay dead and fifteen were wounded, all townsmen. Since the locals had begun the fracas, no attempt was made to arrest the troupers. Forepaugh said he’d never play Johnstown again, but it was such a profitable stand that he later relented.⁶³ Certain towns had a reputation for harboring anti-show elements and circus employees came to them expecting trouble. Industrial centers, where hard work under dirty conditions was the norm, were often trouble spots. Troy, New York, with its foundries; Scranton, Pennsylvania, with its coal mines; and Oldtown, Maine, with its lumbering, were counted among these. College towns, such as New Haven, Ann Arbor, and Princeton were often sites of near-riots. When Forepaugh played Ann Arbor in 1880, he paraded with closed cages after students began throwing firecrackers at the animals. The show people attacked the

students, injuring several. In turn, the students followed the circus to the next town, Jackson, and destroyed some tents.

Circus managers steadfastly insisted that they were at arm’s length from the worst practices of the con artists and vendors of vice. Some even announced in the ring their efforts to close them off, but the presence of these schemes on the circus lot belied such protests. There was little or no police presence, nor any laws to protect the public in any meaningful sense. So it came down to “buyer beware.”

William C. Coup, Barnum’s first circus manager, wrote in his memoirs that he was continually offered large sums to allow schemes to operate on the grounds, opportunities that he claims he resisted. Coup was known for operating a “Sunday School Show,” one without games of chance or chicanery. However, this same circus in 1871 prompted an Indiana newspaper to write: “While the equestrians were in their tent, pursuing their calling, the thieves outside were also in pursuit of theirs, and the New England roads, after a circus, were strewn with wallets.”⁶⁴

Since Forepaugh’s name was in the show title, much of the chiseling and cheating was blamed on him. But of course, Forepaugh paid lip service to honesty and propriety and even railed against the unseemly practices associated with circus people. “The t’ief’s follering my show and givin’ me a bad reputation!” But he did little to discourage the “grifters.” Indeed, he was said to have a weakness toward them.⁶⁵

Of Forepaugh’s involvement in such matters, there can be no doubt. Joseph McCaddon wrote that when he received the office records after the sale of the Forepaugh circus, they included a separate notebook wherein the owner tallied his income from “grift.”⁶⁶

The practices of graft were many and varied. Short-changing was endemic at circuses. Whether in the sale of programs or refreshments, the conduct of games of chance—wherever money changed hands—there lay the possibility of error, intended or not. The sums were small, the business rushed, and confusion reigned. A seller of programs that cost twenty-five cents would accept a five-dollar bill, hand back a program and a dollar’s worth of change, and walk away. Unless he was called on it, he pocketed the difference. There was no one to complain to, and the press of the crowd quickly covered the transaction.

A frequent complaint recounted in newspaper articles was that there were two ticket wagons on the Forepaugh lot, one in advance of the other. At the first wagon buyers were promised they could “Get right in.” The charge was sixty cents. At the second wagon, however, where the crowd was large and hectic, tickets were sold at the advertised price of fifty cents. This was usually branded a swindle, but it was a common practice. The crowds at the fifty-cent ticket wagon reached such proportions it was necessary to drop the front

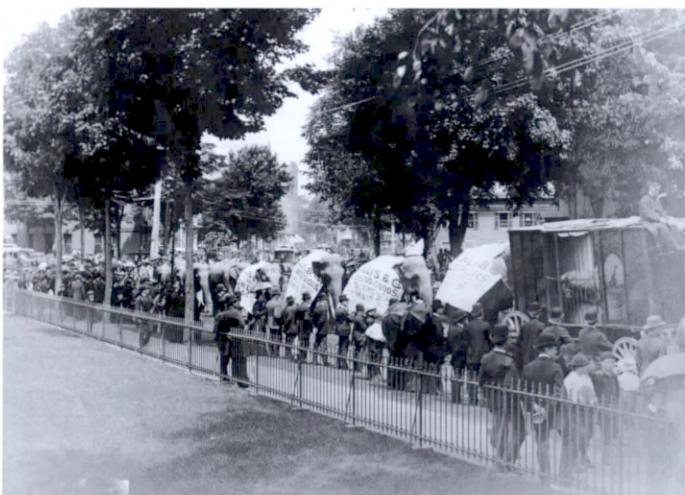
wheels in a trench so that it wouldn't be pushed all over the field. Joseph McCaddon's first job on the Cooper & Bailey circus was to sell sixty-cent tickets out of a bag on his shoulder. Forepaugh was accused of waiting to open the fifty-cent ticket wagon until right before the show began, while the sixty-cent tickets had been on sale all day.

Programs were sold just inside the tent, where sellers implied that buying one was necessary in order to proceed into the show. The gullible usually complied. Once seated, patrons were treated to a blitz of sales pitches by lemonade and peanut vendors, usually young boys who worked on commission. When the concert or after-show was first announced it was priced at twenty-five cents, but as time wore on tickets were sold for as low as ten cents.

None of this constituted criminal behavior—not like rigging the games of chance—and an experienced show-goer could easily ignore it all. Most of these offenses were on the order of a butcher weighing his thumb with the cutlets, or the grocer removing a spoonful of sugar from each bag he sold. But such shoddy tactics lessened the quality of the entertainment. If they hadn't, no one would have taken the trouble to explicate them.

It's obvious Forepaugh and his managers did little to stop such behavior, from the continual short-changing and overcharging to the con games. Nineteenth-century attitudes were that if you gambled you should accept the consequences. There was little tolerance for the unlucky. Society as a whole was inured to malfeasance and discontent.

From a homogeneous society the country had segued into a nation of strangers. Cities had become crowded and impersonal. Immigrants had arrived by the thousands and were set upon by those already here. Dodgy morals were common in interpersonal relations. The hope for better



The Forepaugh elephants were often paraded with advertising for local businesses. In New Britain, Connecticut, circa 1888, the pachyderm promoted F. H. Allis & Co., a store carrying furnishings and clothing.

RMA, Tibbals

times following the Civil War had been ruined by the Panic of 1873, the great labor unrest of 1877, and the "robber baron" activity related to the railroads. What came to be the labor movement and the rise of the Grange had their beginnings at this time. While it wasn't class warfare, it was close. Capitalists such as Forepaugh had their eyes on the dollar, almost to the exclusion of everything else. But Forepaugh offered a good product, one that was well worth attending. For this reason he was successful, not because of the graft, but in spite of it.

We do not mean to imply, of course, that people attending the circus were invariably cheated. We find comments such as the one in a Wisconsin newspaper that read, "The reports spread about a crowd of thieves following [Forepaugh's] show seem to be false . . . as the utmost order prevailed both on and off the grounds."⁶⁷ Yet another, also from Wisconsin, observed that "aside from the pestilential crowd of bummers and thieves following [Forepaugh's great show] it is in itself one of the best conducted and orderly shows traveling."⁶⁸

Perceptions such as these may well have depended on where and when the exhibition was attended, and who was meant by "bummers and thieves." If they were followers, then Forepaugh could have been blameless, but as controlling as he was it's not likely much happened on or near his lot of which he wasn't aware.

On one such occasion, as reported by a staff member, a pickpocket handed Forepaugh a local man's wallet. Asked what it was, the light-fingered gentleman replied that it had been "lifted." Forepaugh ordered it returned, and the thief duly told the man it had been seen dropping from his pocket.

There were schemes perpetrated on the public that had nothing to do with management. One was to offer to slip a man under the canvas for whatever he could afford, say, twenty-five cents. Once inside the tent he was confronted by a partner in the ruse, who promptly threw him out. Forepaugh, to his credit, put a stop to this once he learned of it. Had there been money in it for him, he might not have been so strict.

James E. Cooper and James A. Bailey attempted to clean up the graft, and seem to have succeeded with their own circus. But perceptions are highly subjective, as we see from an instance in 1882 when even the normally austere Barnum & London show came in for harsh words for its concert. We are not accustomed to such verbiage being used to describe The Greatest Show on Earth as "put up to deceive," or "total depravity." "We advise all our readers to shun the concert . . . the meanest piece of deception on record."⁶⁹ The cause of this outburst might have been the jokes of the comedians, or the words of a song.

Cooper and Bailey were exceptions to the rule. For the

majority of circus owners and managers, including Adam Forepaugh, the temptation to cut the corner on honest dealing was apparently too much to resist.

We earlier spoke of the honors paid to the figure of the self-made man in the postbellum period. There was also a dark side to that coin. Banks, railroads, and even the monetary system were despoiled by underhanded methods made possible by the abundance of land, of resources, and of a vast and not yet organized labor force. There was little interference from either the legal or the political systems. While they, too, were self-made men, Forepaugh and his ilk were too small to be considered with the so-called "robber barons" and too powerless to command much more than their

individual fiefdoms. It was mainly the temper of the times that allowed rascality in the circus business. We must mark that circus "crimes," whether collecting the last fifteen cents from boys and girls through short-changing, or the last five dollars from adults through three card monte, were endemic in the circus lot, as well as in society as a whole.

A moralist could condemn these practices. However, while robbing a bank was against the law, "skinning a rube" on a circus lot was not. As far back as 1833, an editorial in *The Working Man's Advocate* commented on the national ethos in this manner:

"Make money, honestly if you can, but at all events, make money."

Part VIII The Real Competition Begins

The four decades generally considered the golden age of the American circus—1880 to 1920—encompasses the firms of Barnum & Bailey and the Ringling Brothers, and their merger in 1919. Since this period also spans the first serious work by circus historians, the designation "golden age" is subject to some question. How much of the opinion of historians is based on nostalgia? Was that which followed 1880 simply a logical extension of what went before? Are antecedents the equal of the improvements on them? The record must speak for itself.

It was in the year 1880 that P. T. Barnum, James A. Bailey and James L. Hutchinson formed the Barnum & London circus. Barnum combined his show with Bailey's Great London (formerly Cooper & Bailey), and Hutchinson, who had made a fortune selling Barnum's autobiography, kicked in cash. They first toured together for the season of 1881.

The Great London and the Adam Forepaugh circuses had begun the 1880 season by combining their shows for a Philadelphia opening on April 12, which they advertised as "The Greatest Aggregation of Talent Hitherto Seen." That November, however, Bailey's joining with Barnum was announced and Forepaugh, who had begun the year cooperating with Bailey, ended the year facing him as his chief rival.

The April exhibition was presented in two rings, denoting the merger of the two circuses. Forepaugh maintained that format when he went on tour, the first time he had done so. There were many objections to this innovation, voiced through the correspondents of the *New York Clipper*.⁷⁰ Having to observe two simultaneous sets of performance appar-

ently overburdened some folks. The purpose of the arrangement was to improve the sight lines as the tent was enlarged. If the single-ring format had been maintained, spectators at both ends of the arena would have been too far from the action to see it well. Two rings required more performers, but attendance in the larger big top more than made up for the cost of the additional payroll.

The Richmond car stables on Lehigh Avenue came on the market in early 1880, and Forepaugh bought them for his new winter home. They consisted of two large brick buildings that had housed the horses of the Second and Third Avenue Street Railway. Since Forepaugh suffered the fire at Duy's Lane in 1879, he spent the winter of 1879 at John O'Brien's quarters in Frankford. His plan was to build some auxiliary space on the Lehigh Avenue property. He spent \$90,000 on real estate in 1880, but our sources do not indicate which project cost what.

The few comments we have found about the 1880 circus economy suggest it was not a particularly good year to be in the circus business. And, as any businessperson knows, one has more control in cutting expenses than in increasing income. Nineteenth-century circus proprietors had to deal with two major costs—performer salaries and printed advertising. In letter after letter we find impresarios coming up with schemes to try to reduce these costs. But solutions were elusive.

In January 1881 Forepaugh announced a contest to find "the Handsomest Woman in America." The chosen one would win \$10,000 and be featured in his circus. This was the bright idea of Charles Day, Forepaugh's advertising manager. Day sold his boss the idea on the basis that the free

publicity would be a great boon to business. He promised Forepaugh he would garner a mile of notices without any outlay because the event would be considered news, not advertising.

Day invited interested ladies to send him their photos. And hundreds did. By March 12, he had received 1,100 entries. The shrewd and budget-minded Forepaugh decided he wouldn't pay \$10,000, but instead would hire a professional actress at a salary. Louise Montague (1859–1910) was the woman who was engaged. She was a variety actress who, according to Day, was attractive, had a good figure, and—a critical attribute—was accustomed to wearing tights. Montague was offered \$75 a week. She held out for \$100. Forepaugh decided he could make up the difference selling Montague's photo, and agreed to the higher amount. She didn't have to perform in the circus arena, but would appear in the daily street parade.

Thomas Moore's poem "Lalla Rookh" was chosen as Montague's vehicle. Moore's verse describes Lalla's entourage journeying from Delhi across the Vale of Cashmere to her wedding; it was this entourage that Montague's role in the daily parade was supposed to mirror, with Lalla riding an elephant, escorted by handmaidens and soldiers, horses and camels. The spectacle played to the public's appetite for the exotic, particularly the long-standing nineteenth-century cultural rage for Near Eastern and Indian glamor.

The ploy worked. As an elated Day reported, "The streets in every large city were packed to see the \$10,000 siren. The receipts in Chicago were the largest of any circus during the same time in America, and people were turned away at every performance." After a lackluster 1880, receipts were \$240,000 in 1881, and \$260,000 in 1882, all attributed to "Lalla Rookh." One report stated the gross income from sales of Montague's photo was as much as \$50,000 a season. Forepaugh was so pleased he gave Day a bonus.⁷¹ What should have ended in congratulations all around, however, instead ended up in a court of law.

The next year, 1883, Louise Montague sued Forepaugh for breach of contract, and for injuries she had suffered when the elephant she was riding in the parade dumped her on



MISS LOUISE MONTAGUE,
Engaged by Adam Forepaugh, at a salary of \$10,000 to appear in
his great pageant, Lalla Rookh. Copyright secured 1881.
GEHRIG. PHOTO. 327 W. Madison St. Chicago.

Louise Montague, an actress, was engaged to be the "\$10,000 Beauty" in Forepaugh's Lalla Rookh parade.

RMA, Tibbals

the street in Waterloo, Iowa. Since Montague had been advertised everywhere as "the \$10,000 Beauty," she had decided the showman owed her that amount. Forepaugh not only refused to fork over the \$10,000, he had replaced her in the "Lalla Rookh" procession with a girl from the show's concert, paying the substitute \$15 a week instead of the \$100 Montague had been getting. So Montague also claimed thirty-two weeks' salary that hadn't been paid.

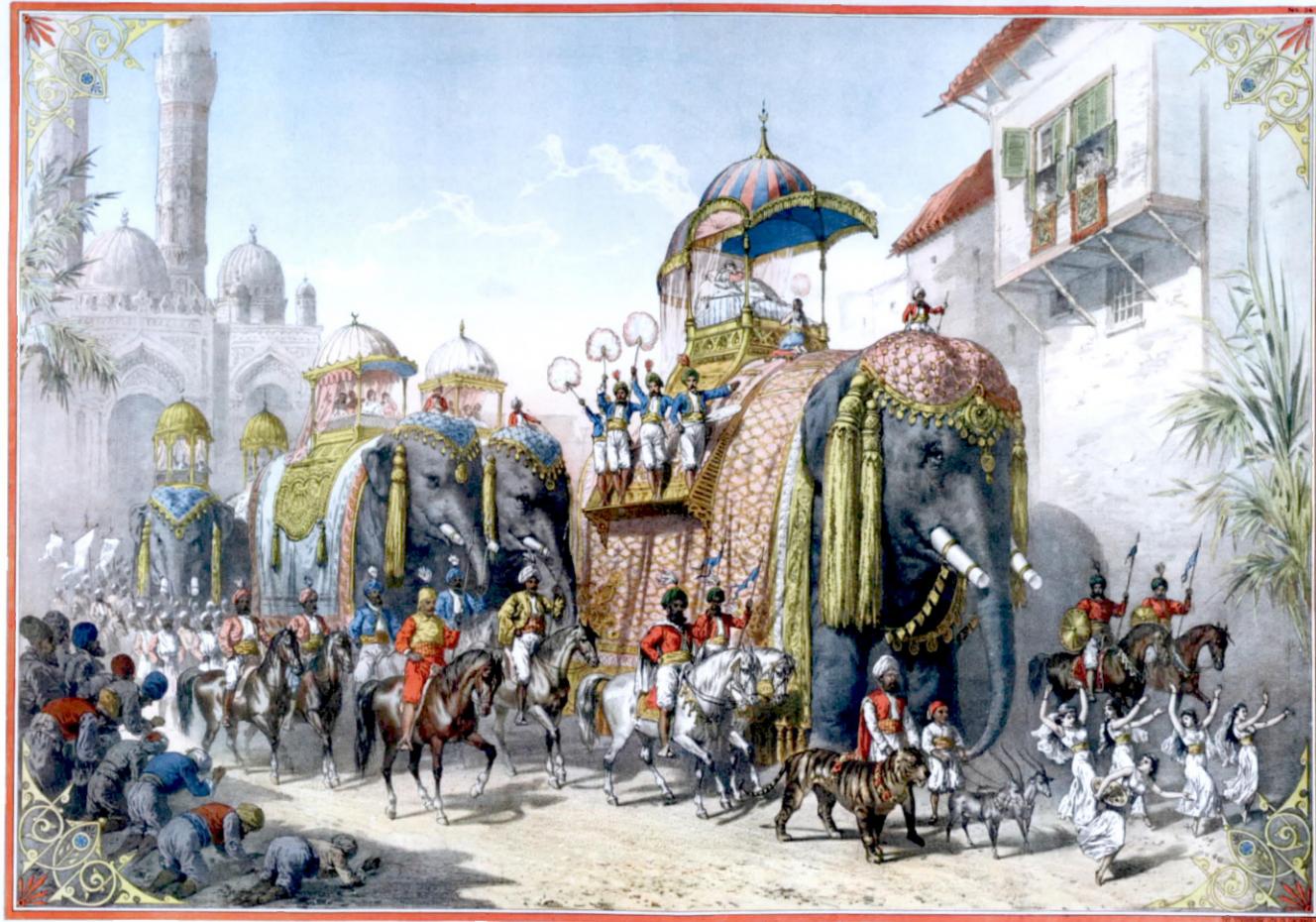
Newspapers leaped at the chance to print the testimony, portraying Montague as "The Beauty" and Forepaugh as "The Millionaire Showman." It was revealed during the trial that in 1881, at a time when he was between wives, Forepaugh had had a mistress traveling with the circus. Since that fact had no bearing on the lawsuit, the line of questioning was not continued. It might have been the plaintiff's lawyer just trying to establish a negative impression of Forepaugh.

So many people wanted a glimpse of the contestants that the courtroom doors had to be locked and an officer stationed at each entrance. Newspaper coverage extended from February 22 to March 26. Montague's arguments seem, in retrospect, to have faced insurmountable odds. All the defense witnesses were in debt to Forepaugh, including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which enjoyed circus advertisements year after year.

The *Inquirer* reported that at one point, when Montague's attorney called out "Addie Forepaugh," "from the farthest corner of the room there approached a huge diamond, behind which could be discerned the face and figure of the witness." Addie was just back from Europe, where he had purchased a 13-carat diamond to wear as a collar pin. He testified to the gentle nature of the elephant Babe, which had unseated Montague on that Iowa street.

Albert A. Stewart of the Strobridge Lithographing Company told of the special posters prepared with Montague's portrait, and how Forepaugh had her name covered when she sued him. No known examples of these lithographs survive. The sheets advertising "Lalla Rookh" in various collections are not portraits of Montague but of idealized women.

ADAM FOREPAUGH'S GREAT SHOW, LARGEST IN THE WORLD



LALLA ROOKH'S DEPARTURE FROM DELHI
ADAM FOREPAUGH'S \$200,000 ORIENTAL PAGEANT.

The opulence of the pageant of Lalla Rookh, as presented in the Forepaugh street parade, was intended to entice audiences to the circus lot.

The upshot of all the testimony was that the jury awarded Montague \$150 for breach of contract and \$500 for back pay, denying her original claim for \$10,000. But even that failed to satisfy Forepaugh, who filed to set aside the award on the basis that the judge had pronounced Babe the elephant "dangerous," when she was not.

For the purposes of this biography, the main points we can glean from the trial testimony are that Forepaugh had a woman companion on the show train, and that he showed a bit of hubris in warning Montague, "I have too much money [for you] to try the law with me."

During the two years prior to Montague's suit however, the American circus matured more fully into its golden age. In 1881, the three largest circuses in America were Adam Forepaugh, Barnum & London, and William C. Coup. They mounted seven publicity wars in that season. In Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington DC, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, St.

Louis, and Augusta, Georgia, they strained to plaster the walls of cities with posters, and to fill newspaper columns with their ads.⁷² In St. Louis that September, the Barnum show placed 23,000 posters and Forepaugh posted 22,000. Together they put up 150,000 board feet of lumber for billboards.⁷³

A severe drought baked most of the eastern half of the country in 1881. This affected the price of feed, the cost of using horses, and thus the pockets of the rural populace upon which circuses depended for custom. The two-ring arena still confounded some observers, as it had the previous year. A reporter in Milwaukee wrote, "The novelty may attract a crowd, but it cannot long remain popular . . . the result is confusing, and the whole affair absurd."⁷⁴

However, Barnum & London, John Robinson, and W. C. Coup all had three-ring arenas, and that was to be the standard for large shows thereafter. The idiom "three-ring circus" can be traced to this 1881 season.



The competition for ever and ever bigger elephants intensified in 1882. At the auction of the Van Amburgh menagerie in November 1881, Forepaugh had bought the monster elephant Bolivar. Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson imported the famous London Zoo elephant Jumbo. W. W. Cole received a big male through the dealers Reiche & Brothers that he named Samson. They were advertised similarly:

"The biggest elephant in or out of captivity" (Barnum)

"The biggest born of brutes" (Cole)

"Largest and heaviest elephant in the world" (Forepaugh)

In terms of herd size, Barnum and Forepaugh each claimed twenty-two, though Forepaugh really had only twenty-one, one animal having died during the opening date of the season.

Across America, the year 1882 proved to be as cold and wet a season as 1881 had been dry. The abnormally high rainfall helped the railroads sell semiarid northern Plains farmland to unsuspecting immigrants, but it interfered mightily with circuses. It was not unusual that year to endure almost constant rain for thirty days at a time. Among the shows that foundered at least partially owing to the bad weather were Myers & Shorb and W. C. Coup.

Early in 1882, Forepaugh made the statement that he had outfitted two circuses in the off-season. No more was said about it. John A. Forepaugh and John O'Brien took out the Royal Circus that year, and Adam may have supplied the equipment, either on lease or for a percentage of the profits.

During Forepaugh's stand in St. Louis September 25 to 28, 1882, the circus was reorganized for a second, southern route. This "reorganization" amounted to a diminution in size, including returning to the one-ring format. This could be ascribed to poor attendance in the South the year before, but there is no statement in the literature to back this up. The importance of these two southern excursions is that they were accomplished prior to southern railways being converted to standard gauge (4 feet, 8.5 inches), which occurred in 1886. Forepaugh, by means we haven't discovered, was thus the first big railroad circus to show in the Deep South. By doing so, he got the jump on Barnum, who didn't appear in the heart of Dixie until 1886.

Forepaugh added to his real estate holdings in 1882 by purchasing two farms in Chester County, Pennsylvania. These he planned to use to winter his horses. Circus owners who did not own grazing land were forced to pay farmers to feed their horses in the off-season, at a cost of one dollar per animal for six months. This was characteristic of Forepaugh. The price of boarding out the circus horses may seem laughably small, but a dollar was a dollar, and overwintering his horses on his own land also gave Forepaugh complete control over their diet.

In the time of Barnum's Jumbo, Forepaugh presented Bolivar, advertised as "The Largest and Heaviest Elephant in the World."

RMA, Tibballs

Part IX Enter Bailey



While both men were skilled and successful managers, the manner in which Forepaugh ran his show was markedly different than Bailey's.

RMA, Tibbals

In 1880, Adam Forepaugh and Cooper & Bailey's Great London had joined forces for a strong open to the season in Philadelphia. James A. Bailey, James L. Hutchinson and P. T. Barnum combined later that year to form the Barnum & London circus. At this point, Forepaugh was faced with even greater and more talented competition than when the Flatfoots were Barnum's partners.

But Forepaugh found in Bailey a man who closely paralleled his own outlook: business came first. As a result, in 1883 the two shows jointly constructed seating once they realized that they were going to be on the same lot (Broad Street below Dickenson) in Philadelphia on consecutive dates. Forepaugh was to occupy the site from April 16 to April 21, Barnum & London from April 30 to May 5. There were other instances of cooperation. They performed to-

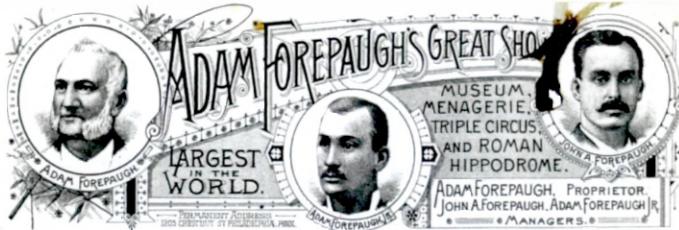
gether in Philadelphia in 1886, and again in 1887, in New York City.

Despite these friendly overtures, the advertising competition continued at a warm pace. Bailey has often been characterized as the most astute manager in the history of the American circus. It is difficult to imagine Barnum cooperating with any competitor, his attitude being that his was the leading show on earth and he did not recognize . . . nay, he did not have any rival.

Just like Forepaugh, Bailey made it his habit to occupy a chair at the front door of his circus. But while Forepaugh used the chair as a place to greet the public and keep an eye on the ticket wagon, Bailey wanted to keep his eye on his employees and spot people seeking free passage into the tent. Forepaugh was outgoing in personality; Bailey was se-

creative, even furtive, in his personal relations. Forepaugh hired his brothers and nephews and gave them responsible positions in his organization. Bailey avoided his family because of a dreadful childhood.

These differences notwithstanding, the men were both excellent businessmen, and much alike in their conduct of business. They respected each other's accomplishments despite the continued rivalry between their shows.



<i>Adam Forepaugh Esq.</i>	188—
Victoriae — — — 4 ⁰ 0 ^s per sheet —	
Staircase. Large & slip — any one color — 2 ¹ / ₂ 0 ^s per set —	
" " " 2 Colors — 3 ¹ / ₂ 0 ^s "	
" " " 3 " — 4 ⁰ 0 ^s "	
Paragraphs, any one color on white or black or blue paper. 3 ¹ / ₂ 0 ^s	
3 sets. Descriptives — 5 colors — — — — 5 ¹ / ₂ 0 ^s per set —	
3 " " 5 " 3 impressions — 7 ⁰ 0 ^s "	
1 " Name. 33x48 " 4 " — — — — 8 ⁰ 0 ^s "	
1 " Description. 20x42 " 4 " — — — — 5 ¹ / ₂ 0 ^s "	
1/2 " Name. " 163x48 " 5 " — — — — 33 ⁰ 0 ^s "	
Gloves & Bottoms — — — — — 3 ¹ / ₂ 0 ^s per set —	
1 set. dates — any one color on white — — 2 ¹ / ₂ 0 ^s per set —	
7/2 " " " " " — — — — 7 ⁰ 0 ^s per hundred	
Coupons — 16 pages. Black or white — — 9 ⁰ 0 ^s per 100	
" " " " " Colored paper — 9 ⁰ 0 ^s "	
7/8 set. Programmes — any one color on white — — 5 ⁰⁰ 0 ^s "	
7/4 " " " " " Black on white — — 1 ⁹⁵ 0 ^s "	
7/5 " " " " " Colored paper — — 2 ⁰⁰ 0 ^s "	
7/6 " " " " " White — — — — 1 ³⁰ 0 ^s "	
7/6 " " " " " Colored paper — — 1 ³⁵ 0 ^s "	

Adam Forepaugh relied heavily on family in the management of his shows. This letterhead of the 1880s includes son Adam Forepaugh, Jr. and nephew, John A. Forepaugh.

RMA, Tibbals

Circus management was a matter of details, and both Forepaugh and Bailey were obsessed with detail. With all the wagons, animals, stakes, ropes, and tents that had to be accounted for each day, the pressure on their time and memory must have been tremendous. Bailey, more so it seems than Forepaugh, kept in constant telegraphic communication with the advance and issued minute instructions that no employee dared veer from. You were not asked for your opinion when you labored for Bailey, yet his employees were loyal and spoke highly of his leadership. Forepaugh, on the other hand, was not held in high regard by his employees,

whom he fired without compunction. Turnover in Forepaugh managers was kept at acceptable levels only through high wages and the fact that so many were close relatives.

Neither man was known for indulging in small talk. Each expended large sums to keep his place in the hierarchy of circuses, where the rivals were gifted and formidable men. Forepaugh was accustomed to major transactions from his years as a horse dealer. Bailey, with Barnum's and Hutchinson's investments, was able to match Forepaugh dollar for dollar to improve the show. However, Forepaugh, because he had no partners, was able to siphon off more funds and diversify his holdings outside the circus.

The immediate difference between the two men hinged on Bailey's delicate psychological makeup. Apparently, as a result of his dysfunctional family, Bailey left home at age eleven, never to contact his relatives again. Under the impression he had drowned, they reportedly didn't search for him. Bailey made his own way in life as a hotel employee, a sutler in the Civil War, and then on the advance of the Robinson & Lake circus. Contrast this with Forepaugh's upbringing in a large, cohesive family, all of whom worked together.

Because Bailey had mastered the details of advance work while traveling ahead of his circuses, he knew the country well, the distances involved, the fine points of dealing with local officials and regional customs. Whether Forepaugh had this facility or not isn't clear; he depended on employees to do all this. Fortunately, Forepaugh was well-served by such men as R. S. Dingess and Charles H. Day, even though their regard for him sometimes seemed more fiduciary than faithful.

In addition to keeping a vigilant eye on circus logistics and operations, Bailey supervised personally all the advertising material, the newspaper inserts, the lithographs, the hundreds of types of printing that a big circus depended on. It is little wonder that he suffered a nervous breakdown in 1885 and had to leave the Barnum show the following two years. Bailey's worth to the organization was apparent in the gross income, which without him sagged below \$1 million in 1885, 1886, and 1887.

So we have a fine contrast between the two most successful circus operators of the late nineteenth century: the one, tightly wound as a watch spring, unable to delegate authority and so suspicious he constantly watched for persons trying to sneak into his tent; the other, a man whose persona as manufactured by his writers was almost caricature, a man of immense wealth, whose goals were to increase his income and have the biggest circus on the road. Homespun and genial despite his foul language, Forepaugh did not understand the verbal niceties his staff devised, only wanting to "put it to Barnum," as C. H. Day wrote. Forepaugh had that Teutonic love of a practical joke, of cruel humor. Bailey, who



Performers and personnel, circa 1880.

RMA, Tibbals

was always addressed by Barnum as “Mr. Bailey,” seemingly had no soft side to his business activities, although he had many long-time employees who swore their fealty to him.

In essence, Bailey was the gentleman Forepaugh was not. They were equally canny, and their rivalry was most interesting to observe.⁷⁵ As Caesar said of Cassius, so Barnum said of Bailey: “He thinks too much.” Barnum used that line to try to explain Bailey’s breakdown, yet Joseph McCaddon, Bailey’s brother-in-law and business manager, blamed Barnum for his constant interference and suggestions as adding to Bailey’s mental stress.

Forepaugh learned in 1883 that owning a circus and managing a circus were not the same thing. He didn’t understand how Bailey operated, and assumed that if he hired some of Bailey’s staff, his “brains,” as it were, his own circus could better compete. What Forepaugh didn’t know was that Bailey was in complete and absolute charge of his enterprise. All the advertising, routing, and purchasing was done on Bailey’s order and under his strict supervision. He was in daily contact with his managers, either in person or by telegraph, and received daily the income reports no matter how late the hour. Forepaugh, on the other hand, had little or no knowledge of routing or of the mechanical details necessary

to raise the tents. He confined himself to counting the day’s receipts.

In a typical Forepaugh gesture, he bought what he thought he needed. He offered three of Bailey’s executives twice what Bailey was paying and succeeded in hiring them away. It turned out to be a costly error on Forepaugh’s part, for when these men turned to Forepaugh for instructions, as they had done with Bailey, there was no one to offer any. He had to pay three years’ worth of salary with little to show for it. It was quite possibly the greatest error of Forepaugh’s career.

Over and over, Forepaugh’s hubris had caused him to discharge good employees, or to let them go elsewhere because he felt that he had but to offer increased salaries to replace them with equally competent men. One of Forepaugh’s habits was to fire a man who displeased him and then hire him back a day later, at a reduction in salary. Since loyalty played no part in Forepaugh’s calculations, he received none from those who went on to productive careers under different managers. Bailey, once he joined Barnum and Hutchinson in the Barnum & London show, proved that loyalty among one’s employees produced long-lasting relationships that added to the efficiency of operation every

showman hoped to generate.

Jump to 1884, the year of "Grant's Last Panic," as it was euphemistically termed. By May banks and brokerage houses had failed in large numbers and the fiscal situation was only saved from disaster by the intercession of J. P. Morgan & Co. The theater season of 1884–85 was largely a failure. It was followed by a bad year in the circus business. Such successive poor business was unavoidable because it was the way field shows worked. Preparation for a circus season was an ongoing thing. Once the personnel were hired and the horses and wagons gathered there was no going back; the season had to begin. Showmen were by nature optimists, and setting out on the route in spite of national economic woe was well within the mores of the business.

It was an awful year. From every quarter came bad news. People came to the lots, but often attended the sideshow for ten cents and ignored the arena with its fifty-cent admission. Tents were half-full. Concession income was dismal. The *Clipper* reported a noticeable diminution in advertising, a sure sign of malaise in the entertainment business.

It had been the practice since the 1850s to feed the workingmen in the cook tents set up on the lot. Performers and staff were boarded in hotels. In June 1885 Forepaugh decreed that henceforth only breakfast would be served in the hotels; dinner and supper, as they were called, would be taken in the cook tent. In addition, the show would not pay hotel bills for Sunday.⁷⁶

With unemployment rampant, there was little the circus

employees could do. After all, they were still being housed and paid and fed (such as it was). Smaller shows were falling by the wayside as their customers dried up. Yet, as the season progressed, there were reports of good business here and there. Eventually results became more normal. Advertising in the *Clipper* picked up.

On July 4, the traditional mid-season point in the circus business, Forepaugh announced he was making no great amount of money but remained hopeful conditions would improve. It was apparent that the routing agreement by which Barnum and Forepaugh had split the country was no deterrent to the bad times. One major circus, Van Amburgh & Co., lowered its admission to twenty-five cents in hope of salvaging something from that '85 season.

The news in August 1885 concerned James A. Bailey's declining health. The *Clipper* reported that his "impulsive mannerisms" led to his giving up his interest in Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson. That interest was picked up by W. W. Cole. James E. Cooper also assumed a percentage, and for two years the show listed Barnum, Hutchinson, Cooper, and Cole as owners. To Forepaugh, this was academic. He still considered the Barnum & London circus his nearest rival.

Jumbo, Barnum's great elephant, was killed on September 15 when he was struck by a train near St. Thomas, Ontario. Forepaugh's Bolivar then stood alone as the largest elephant in captivity, a distinction Forepaugh had claimed all along. His show traveled on fifty-two cars and boasted twenty-five elephants for most of the season, adding four more by the time it reached winter quarters.

Part X Peace

Having shared the cost of erecting seating in Philadelphia in 1885, the Forepaugh and Barnum forces announced in January 1886 that they would combine their shows for a week in Philadelphia, April 26 to May 1. As we noted, Forepaugh, Cooper, and Bailey had collaborated in this way in 1880, apparently with success, so after the sour season of 1885 the idea must have sounded appealing as a means of creating interest.

More important was the announcement in February 1886 of a two-year agreement between Forepaugh and the Barnum show to divide North America into eastern and western portions. One would visit the East in one year, the West in the next. Geographically, the line was drawn along the 47th Parallel to Pittsburgh, then along the Ohio River to the Mississippi, and down to the Gulf of Mexico. Forepaugh

was to play east of the line in 1886, and west of it in 1887.⁷⁷ This effectively lowered the cost of contentious advertising, which had reached lofty levels. A decline to a quarter of the something like \$4,000 it might cost to oppose one another was welcome relief.

Prior to making the sensible decision to cooperate rather than compete, Forepaugh received a great stroke of fortune in the person of Louis E. Cooke, who had been W. W. Cole's general agent. Following the 1884 tour, Cole, who became a part owner of Barnum & London for 1885-1887 (while operating his own circus through 1886), recommended to Cooke that he (Cooke) hire on with Forepaugh. This was an obvious fit, as Cooke had much experience in the West, where Forepaugh spent most seasons. Forepaugh had apparently given up on C. H. Day, whom we suspect

Pittsburgh the Halfway Point

Since the days of wagon travel, Pittsburgh had been the point at which eastern circuses turned back to New York to complete the second half of the twenty-six-week-long season. Pittsburgh is roughly halfway between New York and the Mississippi, and the thought was to reach there by July. A survey of performance dates from 1834 to 1860 reveals that half the Pittsburgh dates were in July. That such a division was honored even after railroad travel made distances less important is proof that tradition ruled in show business, often in the face of practicality.

had become a devotee of strong waters to the extent that he was semi-retired for two seasons.

In 1885, the Barnum show demurred when offered the opportunity to lease Madison Square Garden for six months at \$1,500 a month, preferring to rent only for the two months necessary for rehearsals and performances. Cooke leaped in with an offer to accept the six-month lease Barnum had rejected, and the Garden management accepted. Forepaugh then advertised that the hall would be available from November 15 until his opening in March 1886 for "Balls, special exhibits, carnivals, and special occasions."⁷⁸

At the time, the Buffalo Bill Wild West show was performing on Staten Island. Cooke arranged for the frontiersman to move his operation into the Garden, where it was a great success. Cody and Forepaugh shared the profits.

Cole and Hutchinson were then in position to lease the Garden from Forepaugh for their annual spring opening in 1886. Part of the arrangement was the aforementioned routing agreement, and giving Forepaugh the exclusive right to perform in Philadelphia. Cooke went one better, and proposed that the two big circuses combine for the opening at the Garden. This was accepted and Forepaugh, who had never played New York City, reached the pinnacle of his success. Cooke called it "the biggest show deal on record," and it probably was. Once the Barnum forces agreed to share the New York opening, the combined show's unsurpassed size was guaranteed. There were sixty elephants (twenty of them being Forepaugh's), a mile-long torch-lit parade, and four rings of performers. With them came seven tents, two sideshows, four menageries, all in the largest performing space in the country. The one-week stand in New York yielded a

gross of nearly \$200,000, which the circuses split. It was a record for the time. The *Clipper* saluted the combined shows by printing this encomium: "Undoubtedly, the largest, richest, and by all odds the greatest confederation of tented exhibitions ever seen at any time in the world's history."⁷⁹

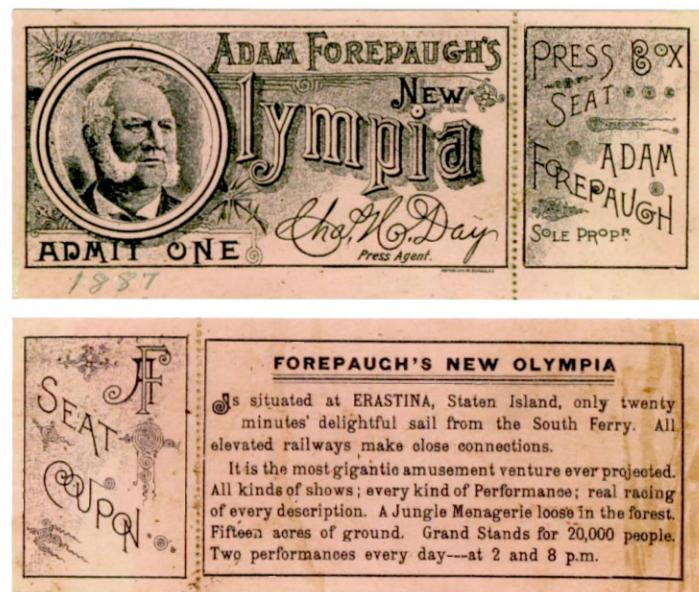
The Barnum people felt that the attendance was not up to their expectations, however. They said they could have done as well alone.

In the meantime, Forepaugh continued to buy real estate, increasing his personal holdings by a block of nineteen brick buildings at Huntington and Lawrence streets in Philadelphia. City records show he owned \$700,000 in assessed real estate value, in addition to an unknown amount in Brooklyn.

As early as 1880, C. H. Day had produced a courier, the cover of which was graced with Adam Forepaugh's portrait and the Shakespearean phrase "The Noblest Roman of Them All." By 1887, the title was clearly appropriate.

By now it is clear there was nothing noble about Forepaugh, other than the fact his minions pronounced him so. To be sure, the subject himself did not measure his worth by the plaudits of hired writers but by the money he made. Since the Barnum partners had to share their profits, and Forepaugh did not, he was the best-paid circus owner in the world. At one time his show was said to be worth \$1 million, although it's not known how that figure was calculated. At roughly four times the annual gross, it seems, by modern standards, to be overpriced at \$1 million. (In fact, when it was sold after Forepaugh's death it changed hands for \$160,000.)

The season of 1887 in New York began with a mile-long street parade featuring the assets of the two largest circuses



An 1887 ticket from Forepaugh's remarkable attraction, Erastina.
RMA, Tibbals

then in existence. In addition, Forepaugh formed a kind of circus amusement park at Erastina, Staten Island, where Buffalo Bill's Wild West had played prior to its move into Madison Square Garden. This may have come about because Forepaugh took over the lease on the property as part of moving Buffalo Bill. He figured to exhibit surplus animals and employ lesser artists than were needed for his main effort. The Staten Island venture was not a success.

Forepaugh had revived the old-fashioned "Courier of St. Petersburg" act as a program finale for 1887. In this, the rider straddled two horses and controlled any number of others by long lines. Addie had thirty-one horses in his string, which galloped twice around the hippodrome track. A 128-sheet lithograph announced this thirty-one-horse act, with Forepaugh's advertising trumpeting "The Greatest of All Great Shows." We know of no larger lithograph anywhere in history; the previous record for the size of a lithograph (actually several hung side by side) had belonged to a 100-sheet advertisement produced by W. W. Cole in 1883.

While 1887 marked the apogee of the Forepaugh circus among its rivals, the owner would have found more satisfaction with the results of the 1888 season. Touring the eastern territory that year he earned \$325,000, the largest profit of his career.⁸⁰ This compares with Barnum & Bailey netting \$200,000 on a gross of \$1 million. In 1889, during the season fated to be his last, Forepaugh went back to the West and his net was closer to his usual taking, about \$260,000.

In first weeks of 1890, while out looking at property, Forepaugh contracted a bad cold that worsened into influenza, and then pneumonia. He died on January 22, 1890.

For a forceful, busy man, always in a hurry, Forepaugh's death was unusually peaceful. From his sickbed he asked for a glass of milk, drank it, lay back, and died. He was fifty-nine years old, at a time when the average lifespan of an American man was forty-seven. Forepaugh had been ill only twice before, with yellow fever in 1882 and with heart trouble in 1888. His will provided that the circus be sold and the proceeds split between his wife and his son.

It was the custom for nineteenth-century obituaries to dwell on the deceased's triumphs and overlook his shortcomings. Forepaugh's name was well known; he was famous mostly because "Forepaugh" was plastered on livery stable walls and in newspaper advertisements for more than twenty years. Self-advertised fame carries with it the burden of perpetuation. Fame is fleeting if it is not repeated in some form. Daniel Boorstin said that anyone could become a celebrity if only he could get into the news and stay there. Forepaugh was forgotten as a personality once his name no longer was used to sell circus tickets. But it lived on in the titles of circuses years after his death. James A. Bailey bought the Forepaugh show, and he bought the Sells Brothers' Circus, and he combined them into Adam Forepaugh & Sells Brothers,

a circus in existence as late as 1911. Unlike Barnum, whose name was a household word, the public knew Forepaugh only as the owner of a circus. To be sure, it was a very big circus, and Forepaugh was very rich. And perhaps, to a kid who started as a butcher and horse trader, that's really what it was all about.

In 1881, a Georgia woman wrote her local newspaper describing what the circus meant to her as a child:

We found ourselves at last perched precariously on one of the high, narrow seats around the circus ring, the great canvas swelling overhead, the band playing, the lions roaring, the hyenas howling, the angelic beautiful ladies careering around on those weird spotted horses, the terrible elephant chained in full sight, the streaked and striped clown kicking his hat on his head 'mid the wildest enthusiasm of the audience.⁸¹

This anonymous description, almost poetic, typifies the effect of circus performances on the public. It was the very effect Forepaugh and his ilk worked to accomplish. Profit aside (though such was never far from the manager's thoughts), such rapture could have been repeated day after day, season after season. We doubt that Forepaugh understood the longing represented by the hordes of spectators who purchased his tickets, but he surely enjoyed the fruits of their custom. The ecstatic, seraphic happiness that the public felt on circus day began with the posting of lithographs and the placement of advertisements in the newspaper.

The arrival of the show was the beginning of a local holiday, brought across the miles by Adam Forepaugh, a man of energy and shrewdness, who decided what the public wanted, and spent over twenty-seven years giving them a good show.

Acknowledgments

In the construction of this paper I am indebted to several of my fellow historians.

Fred Dahlinger Jr., of Baraboo, Wisconsin, gave me advice, and supplied references and encouragement, and his vast knowledge of railroad affairs.

Fred Pfening III, of Columbus, Ohio, downloaded hundreds of nineteenth-century newspapers, and gave me the circus references therein.

William L. Slout of San Bernardino, California; Steve Gossard of Bloomington, Illinois; and John F. Polacsek of Detroit aided me by research.

The Forepaugh parade represented in an 1886 courier.

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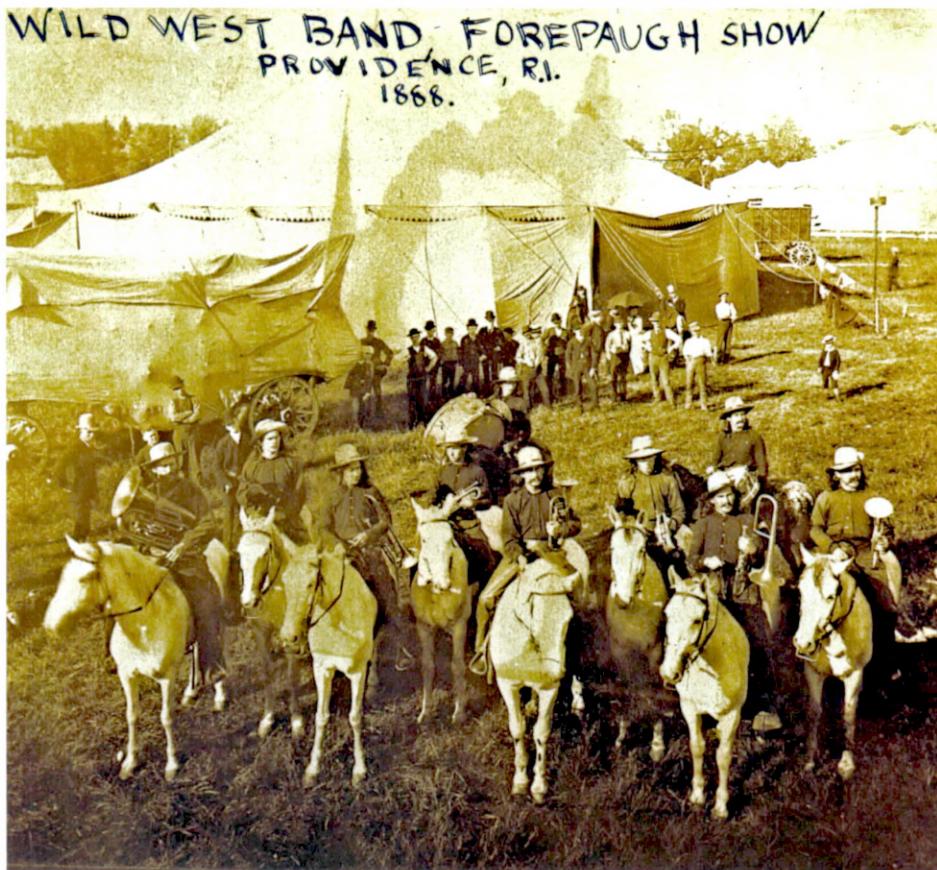
CURIOS VEHICLES OF ALL NATIONS SEEN IN THE GREAT 4 PAW SHOW.



THE MOST INTENSELY INTERESTING STREET SPECTACLE EVER WITNESSED.

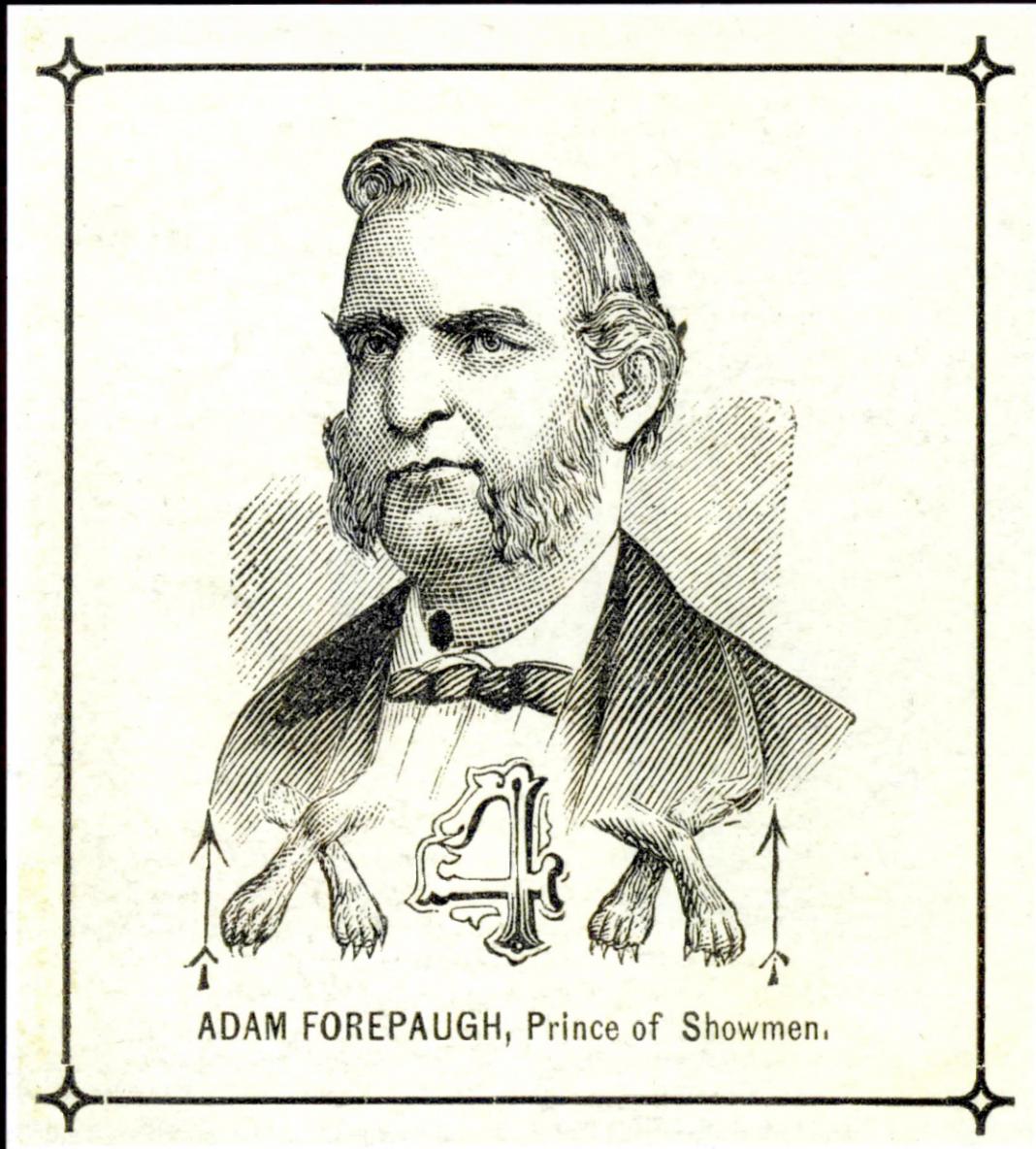
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31. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "The Circus Humbugs," January 26, 1890, p. 12.
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39. *Lansing (MI) Republican*, May 22, 1873.
40. *New York Clipper*, December 2, 1869.
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43. William L. Slout, "Two Rings and a Hippodrome Track," *Bandwagon*, vol. 44, no. 6 (November–December 2000), pp. 18–21. Slout's research reveals that the two-ring innovation occurred in 1873. Previously, in Thayer and Slout, *Grand Entrée: The Birth of the Greatest Show on Earth, 1870–1875* (San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 1998), the date was given as 1872.
44. Castello interview, *Hartford (CT) Courant*, April 30, 1873.
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47. *Sunday Mercury* (New York), April 29, 1876.
48. *The Era*, July 29, 1877.
49. The term “Flatfoots” originated during a routing argument, circa 1837, between the first generation Flatfoots—June, Titus & Angevine—and competitors Raymond & Waring.
50. *Sunday Mercury* (New York), April 29, 1876.
51. *Sporting and Theatrical Journal*, March 8, 1884.
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53. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 8, 1881, p. 7.
54. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 26, 1881.
55. *New York Dramatic News*, June 11, 1881.
56. *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, May 27, 1857. The circus reviewed was that of Yankee Robinson.
57. *New York Daily Tribune*, January 20, 1884.
58. *New York Morning Journal*, March 21, 1884.
59. *New York Sun*, March 21, 1884.
60. Harry G. Frankfort of Princeton defined “humbug” as “a pretentious bit of misrepresentation that falls short of lying.”
61. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, undated clipping, Pfening Archive.
62. “A ‘Thimble Rigger’ How the Nimble Fingered Rogue Works His Shell Game” *Meriden (CT) Daily Republic*, Monday October 20, 1894 p.6.
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76. *New York Clipper*, June 13, 1885.
77. *Brewster (NY) Standard*, February 26, 1886.
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79. *New York Clipper*, May 8, 1886, p. 120.
80. *New York Clipper*, February 1, 1890, p. 1.
81. *Georgia Weekly Telegraph* (Macon), November 25, 1881, p. 3.



ADAM FOREPAUGH, Prince of Showmen.

The portrait of Adam Forepaugh, Prince of Showmen, printed on the cover of the show's 1878 route book featured a visual pun on the showman's name. Drawing four paws under the portrait, the artist played with the colloquial use of the shortened "4-Paw" that appeared in much of the show's advertising. The term nicely shortened the long and easily misspelled name while also emphasizing the impresario's focus on presenting animals. This symbolic use of the paws can also be seen on the crest, drawn in the lower left corner of the poster featured on our cover.

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